LIGHT FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN: ANTI-COLLECTIVIST STYLE IN EDISON DENISOV'S *QUATRE PIÈCES POUR FLÛTE ET PIANO,* WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS BY BACH, BEASER, CARTER, FAURÉ, MARTIN, IBERT, LIEBERMANN, AND OTHERS

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Luce, Brian Arzy, Light From Behind the Iron Curtain: Anti-Collectivist Style in Edison Denisov's *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*, With Three Recitals of Selected Works by Bach, Beaser, Carter, Fauré, Martin, Ibert, Liebermann, and Others. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), August 2000, 151 pp., 21 musical examples, 2 interviews, 4 letters, 1 manuscript score, bibliography, 58 titles.

An examination of the compositional style illustrative of the anti-collectivist ideology as found in Edison Denisov's *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*. Includes a short history of Denisov's formal training, history of the Soviet musical environment, an overview of his creative output, and discussion of the anti-collectivist characteristics in his works. Defines the anti-collectivist doctrine as individual reaction to the totalitarian collective of the Soviet communist state of the twentieth century. Identification of eclectic compositional techniques, and how they represent individual expression under a totalitarian regime. Listing of Denisov's works with the flute in a primary role, interviews with Aurèle Nicolet and Ekaterina Denisov, correspondence from Denisov to Nicolet, and the manuscript score to *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano* follow as appendices.

Recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the University of North Texas Library

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LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

CHAPTER 1
EDISON DENISOV

Edison Denisov was a champion of progressive musical composition in the Soviet Union before and after Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika. A faculty member of the Moscow conservatory, Denisov was the first Russian composer to have a serial composition, *The Sun of the Incas* (1960), performed outside the Soviet Union in Darmstadt and Paris. His association with Western European composers including Boulez, Stockhausen, Ligeti, and Crumb, and publication by Universal Edition, Hans Sikorski, C. F. Peters, and Alphonse Leduc et C$^{ie.}$ provided Denisov with performers and audiences abroad. However, Denisov's compositions met with disapproval by the state-sanctioned Union of Soviet Composers, resulting in cancellations of domestic performances and limitation of foreign travel. Despite his political position, Denisov continued to refine a compositional style that mirrored his western contemporaries from 1964 until his death in 1996.

Engineering and musical studies at the University of Tomsk

Edison Vasilyevich Denisov was born on April 6, 1929 in Tomsk, Siberia, the

only child of Vasily Grigoryevich, a physicist and Antonia Ivanovana Titova, a doctor.[1] He studied the mandolin, clarinet, and eventually the piano, an instrument which allowed him to enter the Tomsk Music College. Upon graduation from his general education school, Denisov entered the Physics and Mathematics Department of Tomsk University where he studied mathematics and engineering. At the same time, Denisov attended classes at the music college, and his interest in composition grew through the study of Glinka's and Shostakovich's music. After receiving a degree (with honors) in music education from the Tomsk Music College in 1950, Denisov began to contemplate two possible professions: music or mathematics.

Shostakovich's Correspondence and Influence

Denisov wrote Dmitry Shostakovich and requested that the composer evaluate his work and appraise his musical ability. Shostakovich thoroughly evaluated the compositions Denisov sent him and shared them with other composers in Moscow.

> Dear Edik, your compositions have astonished me. If you don't have the elementary musical education, it is just a wonder how you could be so proficient in your composition which looks fairly professional to me...Many things in your compositions I liked very much. I believe that you are endowed with a great gift for composition. And it would be a great sin to bury your talent...[2]

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[1] Vasily Denisov was a pioneer of radio communication in Siberia. He experimented with radio communication for balloon aircraft and built the first short wave radio transmitter and broadcast station in Siberia. He also invented a device to accompany silent films with music. Because of his respect for inventors, he named his son after Thomas Alva Edison.

[2] Dmitry Shostakovich, *Letters to Edison Denisov*. All letters from Dmitry Shostakovich to Edison Denisov were first published by Detlef Gojowy in *Musick des Ostens* No. 10 (Kassel, Basel, London, 1986).

On Shostakovich's advice, Denisov applied to enter the Moscow Conservatory in the spring of 1950 but failed to pass the entrance examinations, revealing his lack of knowledge in music theory. After graduating from Tomsk University in 1951 as a specialist in functional analysis, Denisov again attempted to enter the Moscow Conservatory. After thoroughly studying theory, he passed the entrance examinations and enrolled as a composition student in the summer of 1951. The correspondence between Denisov and Shostakovich continued through Denisov's postgraduate studies at the Moscow conservatory.

Musical Studies at the Moscow Conservatory

Denisov began his musical study during a time of intensive scrutiny of the arts by the Communist Party. A 1948 resolution adopted by the Communist Party Central Committee rebuked composers including Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Shebalin, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Debussy, with the majority of the criticisms and the policies created as a result of this action from the Committee's cultural spokesman, Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov.

> The state of affairs is particularly bad in the case of symphonic and operatic music. The Central Committee has here in mind those composers who persistently adhere to the formalist and anti-people school – a school which has found its fullest expression in the works of composers like Comrades Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Shebalin, Popov, Miaskovsky, and others. Their works are marked by formalist perversions, anti-democratic tendencies which are alien to the Soviet people and their artistic tastes.

> Typical of this music is the rejection of the basic principles of classical music, and the preaching of atonalism, dissonance, and disharmony, which are alleged to be signs of "progress" and "innovation"; the rejection of so important a thing as melody; and a striving after chaotic and neuropathic discords and accumulations of sounds. This music savours of the present-day modernist bourgeois music of Europe and America – a music which reflects the *marasme* of bourgeois culture.[3]

This period from 1946-48 would become known as *Zhdanovshchina*[4] because of the cultural purges he instigated. The effect of these criticisms was to limit the material studied at the Moscow Conservatory, and the study of "formalist"[5] composers' music was virtually eliminated. Professors locked classrooms from the inside in order for students to study a Shostakovich symphony or a Prokofiev sonata.

Shostakovich advised Denisov to study composition with Vissarion Yakovlevich Shebalin (1902-1963), who exposed his students to a wide range of music, including banned compositions such as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Prokofiev's *The Buffoon*, and Shostakovich's symphonies. Since Shebalin noted that Denisov's early works were derivative of Shostakovich's style he advised Denisov to study the works of Debussy as "he is far more akin to you."[6] Shebalin played recordings of Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Berg, Dallapiccola, and Boulez, and he also encouraged students to attend classes of other composition teachers. Denisov attended Heinrich Neuhaus' and Aram

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3 Alexander Werth, *Musical Uproar in Moscow*, (London: Turnstile Press, 1949), 29.

4 Boris Schwartz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia Enlarged Edition 1917-1981*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 204.

5 For a complete definition see Chapter 2, note 28.

6 Yuri Kholopov and Valerie Tsenova. *Edison Denisov*. Trans. Romela Kohanovskaya, (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 7.

Khachaturian's classes, studied orchestration under Nikolai Rakov, and continued musical analysis with Victor Zuckerman.

Denisov headed the Student Scientific Society at the Moscow Conservatory, and members attended performances of music written by their colleagues. Through his efforts, society members heard modern compositions and learned the aesthetics associated with this music. He also wrote press notices and record reviews for the *Sovetskaya Muzyka* magazine. In the seventh issue of 1956, Denisov wrote an article entitled "Once More on the Youth Education" criticizing top officials of the Union of Soviet Composers for their lack of encouragement of young composers by failing to attend their concerts and examinations. Denisov also challenged a work exclusion from a concert because it contained lyrics by Robert Burns, labeled seditious by the cautious composition department.[7]

Denisov was a member of three student expeditions to remote areas of the Soviet Union to research folk music of each region. In the summer of 1954, Denisov and fellow composer Alexander Pirumov were members of a group of students who travelled to the Kursk region; the following summer, Denisov, Pirumov, and Alexei Nikolayev travelled and recorded folk music in the less well-known Altai region; and after graduation in 1956, he made his final expedition to his home region of Tomsk. Denisov utilized many folk motives and themes discovered during these trips in his student opera *Ivan the Soldier*

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[7] Edison Denisov, "Once More on the Youth Education," *Sovetskaya Muzyka* 7 (1956), 29.
Robert Burns' text "...Of a' the arts the wind can blow, I dearly like the west..." was assumed to relate to the 'bourgeois West' ideology which was antithetical to communism.

(1956).[8]

Upon graduation in June 1956, on Shostakovich's recommendation, Denisov was accepted as a member of the Union of Soviet Composers, and he began his postgraduate studies at the Moscow Conservatory that same year. Denisov heard a live performance of music from the Second Viennese School when Glen Gould visited the conservatory and performed Schoenberg's *Three Piano Pieces*, Op. 11, Berg's *Sonata,* Op. 1 and Webern's *Piano Variations,* Op. 27 in May 1957. Gould also lectured about Schoenberg and the serial method.[9] The recital made Denisov realize that his education at the conservatory inadequately prepared him for the cosmopolitan musical culture of the time.

After graduation in 1959, Denisov returned to study of composers who were openly disdained by the communist intelligentsia. He began with works of Stravinsky, which would later result in published analyses, and continued with the music of Bartók, Debussy, and Hindemith.[10] The study of Webern's *String Trio, Op. 20*, borrowed from pianist Gèrard Frémy, his French neighbor at the conservatory hostel, exposed Denisov to the serial technique. Denisov was now prepared to compose in his own personal style,

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8 Many of Denisov's works are described in terms of "...the employment of Russian folk material..." Valeria Kholopova, "Edison Denisov," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* v. 4 (1980), 366. However, the designation is more likely a protective measure by Denisov's supporters to insulate him from criticism and condemnation of his music. Andrew Stiller observes: "Within that Culture, Denisov managed to survive by allowing himself to be defined as a musicologist – a teacher of counterpoint, analysis, and orchestration – rather than as a composer. There was also a sort of protective conspiracy among his friends and supporters to obscure the essential radicalism of his music. V. Kholopova's ludicrous *New Grove* article on Denisov, for example, goes to considerable lengths to assert a (largely imaginary) folk influence on the composer's work." "Denisov: Chamber Works," *Musical America,* (November 1990), 71-73.

9 Susan Bradshaw, "The Music of Edison Denisov," *Tempo*. 151 (December 1984), 3.

10 Many of Denisov's analyses were printed in journals and prefaces to scores, notably the preface to the full score of Stravinsky's "The Firebird," *Muzyka,* 1964, and "Igor Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat,*" *Vechernaya Moskva,* May 11, 1963.

culminating in his first successful work *The Sun of the Incas.*

The *Sun of The Incas*

The Sun of the Incas, a cantata on poems of Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral premiered in Leningrad on November 30, 1964 with soprano Lydia Davydova and Gennady Rozhdestvensky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic. Repeated requests by the Moscow authorities almost canceled the premiere; however, the Philharmonic's management did not want to jeopardize its contract with Rozhdestvensky because of a program change.

> I remember that everything was prohibited and not allowed – the menace of a ban was hovering over the whole matter. I was left with the impression that Denisov's composition was a major achievement. It was a pioneering work and it always involved a great amount of risk both for the composer and the performer. If you can't do anything, then it means that you violate some social relationships...[11]

The performance was well-received by the audience, and through publication by Universal Edition, the cantata drew attention from the international music community. Billed as the first serial composition by a Soviet composer to be performed in the West, Bruno Maderna conducted the work in Darmstadt in the summer of 1965, and following the Darmstdat performance Pierre Boulez programmed *The Sun of the Incas* in a concert which also included the music of Webern and Varèse. As a result of the Parisian premiere, Denisov attracted attention of composers throughout the world, and when Joel

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11 *Interview with Gennady Rozhdestvensky*, (Kholopov and Tsenova, 1988), 16.

Spiegelman[12] showed the score to Roger Sessions and Igor Stravinsky, Stravinsky liked the work and commented that Denisov was "remarkably talented."[13] In contrast, the Union of Soviet Composers severely criticized the work with comments like: "...complete anarchy on the part of the composer...substitution of creativity by erudition"[14]

International Recognition and Soviet Retaliation

Dissemination of Denisov's music in Western Europe and international opinion continued to bring retaliation from communist artistic censors. In 1966 Denisov wrote an article entitled, "The New Technique is not a Fashion" for the Italian magazine *Il Contemporaneo*, a supplement to the newspaper, *Rinascità*, published by the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party. In the article, Denisov identified Western European ignorance of young Soviet composers and their compositional language.

> A characteristic feature of the overwhelming majority of young composers in the Soviet Union is their striving to expand the framework of the musical language and not confine it to the tonal system exclusively...The Soviet composers have lately been more and more engaged in experimentation, expanding the range of their musical language and employing the new types of techniques evolved in the 20th century, and this tendency should be regarded as a good pledge against the main danger threatening our music in the postwar years – that of academicism...The young generation of Soviet composers

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12 American composer Joel Spiegelman, director of the Sarah Lawrence College Studio for Electronic Music and Sound Media since 1966, previously taught at the Longy School and Brandeis University. He was director of the New York Electronic Ensemble (1970-73) and conductor of the Russian Orchestra of the Americas (1976-79).

13 Kholopov and Tsenova, 16.

14 Khrennikov and Shchedrin, *Sovetskaya Muzyka* No. 1, (1966), 30-32.

> turned to the new techniques not at all to follow the current 'fashion' but because the bounds of the tonal system proved too narrow to express the new ideas constantly raised by life itself.[15]

Denisov did not expect a Soviet response to his foreign article; however, the Union of Soviet Composers took issue with Denisov's statement that the new generation of Soviet composers were utilizing 'formalist' techniques: "...in defiance of the truth alleged that a majority of the young Soviet composers preferred Serialism, dodecaphony and aleatory in their work..."[16] In the article, Denisov included a list of composers, including Sergei Slonimsky, Arvo Pärt, and Sophia Gubaidulina, who wrote using serial, dodecaphonic, and aleatoric compositional techniques. The Union of Soviet Composers accused Denisov of listing the composers in order to provide the international community with a distorted view of the younger generation of Soviet composers, a generation which the Union considered a group of dissidents who were determined to ignore the official artistic decree of the communist party.

Although the publication was in a foreign communist journal, Soviet response to the article originated at an official level. Denisov's article was the subject of a special session of the Composers Union on February 8, 1967. General Secretary Tikhon Khrennikov prompted adoption of the resolution: "On Violation of the Ethical and Civic Standards of Behavior by Some Members of the Composers Union" which stated:

> The secretariat regards the publication by the composer E. Denisov of his article in the Italian bourgeois mass media,

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15 Edison Denisov, "The New Technique is Not a Fashion, *Rinascità*, (August, 1966).

16 *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, trans. Mikhail Safarian, 10 (1970), 44.

> containing the basically wrong statements on the current trends in Soviet music, as a brazen violation of the ethical and civic standards of conduct compulsory for each member of the Union. The Secretariat asks the officials of its Moscow branch to examine this matter and report the results to the Secretariat of the Composers Union of the USSR.[17]

Denisov was temporarily dismissed from his position as Professor of Orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory in July 1967 because of "insufficient teaching load."[18] His students resented the centralist control and refused to enroll in the class without Denisov as the teacher, and in response to the students' reaction, the Rector of the Conservatory reinstated Denisov, labeling the action as an "administrative misunderstanding." Retaliation by the Soviet government and its artistic unions against "formalist" dissidents was commonplace, as Boris Schwarz describes:

> ...In July 1968, the gifted junior conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic, Igor Blazhkov, was removed from his post because his programs showed his consistent interest in musical modernism and the avant-garde. He was prevented from obtaining any other conducting assignment and returned to Kiev where, for a time, he lived in straitened circumstances. The composer Denisov, an avant-gardist, was suddenly dismissed from the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory; he was reinstated eventually.[19]

On numerous occasions, Denisov was denied international exposure due to the Composers Union's interception of foreign commissions and lecture invitations. When

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17 Kholopov and Tsenova, 18.

18 This official administrative decision was carried out by A. V. Sveshnikov, Rector of the Moscow State Conservatory.

19 Schwarz, 483-84

permitted to travel abroad, he was well-received by Western musicians, and began to correspond with Western composers including Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Dallapiccola, George Crumb, and Henri Dutilleux. In particular, his contact with Pierre Boulez would play a major part in his career. Boulez attempted to bring Denisov to Paris for the Parisian premiere of *The Sun of the Incas* in 1965, but Soviet officials refused to grant Denisov a visa. Boulez voices his frustration in a letter to Denisov:

> I am furious, especially as this refusal comes from the lowest-ranking music officials, who themselves write music that 'would make dustbins vomit,' as Varèse used to say. And what about the personal freedom, a question on which I cannot accept compromise; there is no reason why these officials, on a regal whim (like Louis XIV) forbid you purely and simply, and without any justification, to travel to hear your own work performed.[20]

Finally, during a BBC Orchestra tour of the Soviet Union in 1967, Boulez met Denisov in person for the first time. The association between Denisov and Boulez continued; and, on invitation from Boulez, Denisov worked at I.R.C.A.M.[21] from 1990 to 1991.

After the *Sun of the Incas*, Denisov developed his eclectic mature compositional style in vocal and instrumental works. *Crescendo e diminuendo pour harpsichord et douze cordes, Op. 22* (1965), recorded by Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, was Denisov's first recorded work to receive international distribution.[22] Along with the larger works *Peinture pour orchestre, Op. 36* (1970) and the *Aquarelle*

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20 Pierre Boulez *letter to Edison Denisov*, November 14, 1965 from Kholopov and Tsenova, 22.

21 Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique, Paris, France.

22 Columbia LP, MS 7052

pour vingt-quatre cordes, Op. 51 (1975), Denisov wrote a number of solo and duo concertos for pre-eminent Western soloists, including flutist, Aurèle Nicolet; oboist, Heinz Holliger; clarinetist, Eduard Bruner; and violinist, Gidon Kremer. In chamber music, as well as in his concertos, Denisov freely employed polytonal, polymodal, serial, dodecaphonic, and aleatoric compositional techniques employed in: *Trios Pièces pour violoncello et piano, Op. 26* (1967), *Sonate pour saxophone et piano, Op. 37* (1970), *Sonate pour violoncello et piano, Op. 40* (1971), *Solo pour flûte* (1971), *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano* (1977), and the *Sonate pour violin seule* (1978).

Recalling administrative talents from when he led the Student Scientific Society, Denisov managed two concert series in the 1970s that were funded by the Union of Soviet Composers. The concert series, entitled "20th-Century Music" and "New Works by Moscow Composers" featured the music of Alfred Schnittke (b. 1934), Sophia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), Tigran Mansuryan, Nikolai Roslavets, and several Western composers. Reacting to the growing national and international renown of Denisov, Gubaidulina, Yelena Firsova, Dmitry Smirnov, Alexander Knaifel, Victor Suslin, and Vyacheslav Artemov, Tikhon Khrennikov, General Secretary of the 6th Congress of Soviet Composers, vehemently asserted that these composers did not represent "the real physiognomy of Soviet music."[23] As a result, boycotts and other impediments to performances were placed against this group of composers who became known to Soviet

[23] Tikhon Khrennikov reacted to the dissident composers in a speech to the Sixth Congress of the Union of Soviet Composers. Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age: 1917-1987*, (1998) 266.

musicians as the "Khrennikov Seven."[24] After a well-received performance of these composers' works conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory in 1982, discrimination against the "Khrennikov Seven" subsided. Later in the 1980s, Denisov and the other progressive Soviet composers' works were openly allowed domestic and international performances, and during the 1988 "Moscow-Autumn"[25] festival the music of Denisov, Alfred Schnittke , Sofia Gubaidulina, and other contemporary composers was performed. Gerald Seaman, attending this particular "Moscow-Autumn" observed:

> The current Soviet attitude toward contemporary composition is refreshingly lacking in self-satisfaction and complacency. Just as the whole of Soviet life is being subjected to an unprecedented onslaught of revelations and criticism in papers, radio, television, and on the walls of the artistic district know as the Arbat, one cannot but feel that the current era may become a turning point in Russian history. In the current ferment, anything may happen.[26]

Later Recognition and the Association of Modern Music

After the reforms of Glasnost, Perestroika, and open acceptance of progressive composition in the Soviet Union, Denisov was named one of the seven secretaries of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1990. The Union later nominated Denisov to the

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[24] Aurèle Nicolet recalls a Moscow performance in the 1970s whereupon a KGB agent asked him to reconsider his selections, including works by Denisov, for the concert and substitute a work by Mozart. Aurèle Nicolet, *Interview*, (2000).

[25] The nine-day festival features works selected from the submissions of the Union of Soviet Composers Moscow branch members. These public performances often lead to publication, recording, and broadcasting of the works thereby advancing the composer's career.

[26] Gerald Seaman, "Russian Music at the Crossroads," *Current Musicology* (1993), 59.

appointment of Peoples Deputy of Russia. In this position he not only attempted to loosen the strict ideology that had repressed him and other progressive Soviet composers, but he sought to raise the level of music education through subsidizing programs in schools, church choirs, and philharmonic societies.

In January 1990, the Association of Modern Music (AMM) was created by Denisov and the younger generation of post-Glasnost composers including Dmitry Smirnov, Victor Ekimovsky, Alexander Vustin, Yelena Firsova, Nikolai Korndorf, Vladimir Tarnopolsky, Alexander Raskatov and Yuri Kasparov. The younger generation decided that Denisov, who had spent his life in conflict with the Composers Union for his support of modern music, should be elected President. The association was similar to its precursor, Association of Contemporary Music in the 1920s that included Dmitry Shostakovich, Nikolai Roslavets, and Gavriil Popov among its members. The earlier Association for Contemporary Music (ASM) was forcibly dissolved in 1931 as it fell prey to the "less provincial" Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM) which eventually was dissolved itself by the Communist Party's Central Committee in 1932.[27] The AMM became involved in various activities ranging from concerts and festivals of Soviet and foreign composers to arranging publishing and recording contracts.

From 1990 until his death on November 24, 1996, Denisov traveled freely throughout Europe accepting commissions and festival invitations. Upon an invitation from Boulez, Denisov worked at I.R.C.A.M. from 1990-91 where he wrote *Sur la nappe*

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[27] Schwarz, 49-60.

d'un étang glacè (1991) for nine instruments and tape, his second composition for the tape-accompanied medium. Still Professor of orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory, Denisov taught composition for the first time to a student from South America in 1993,[28] and was a jury member on numerous composition contests including the Guido d'Arrezo Festival in Italy, The Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels and the sacred music competition in Freiburg. He continued to receive awards and nominations across Europe, including a nomination to the *Academie des Arts et Lettres* in 1986 and receipt of the *Grand Prix de la Ville de Paris* in 1993.

[28] Upon stalwart insistence of the student, the administration of the Moscow conservatory allowed the student to enroll in composition study with Denisov. Ekterina Denisov, *Interview* (2000).

CHAPTER 2
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

In order to understand Denisov's position within the musical atmosphere controlled by the Union of Soviet Composers, it is necessary to elaborate on the mature artistic doctrine of the Soviet Union, and in particular the role of the artist to that of "the people." The Union of Soviet Composers, the single most important musical organization in the Soviet Union, governed musical performance and publication at national and local levels from 1932 to 1989. Its selective membership was restricted to professional composers, theorists, and musicologists, and the benefits of membership included state-subsidized performances, publication, and attendance at national and local festivals and congresses. The Union espoused the communist musical ideology through publications *Sovetskaia muzyka* and *Muzykal'naia zhizn* where composers received editorial approval or condemnation.

Musical Environment After the Revolution

Following the revolution of 1917 and before the 1932 Soviet resolution "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations" which founded the Union of Soviet Composers (*Soyuz Sovetskiky Kziorov*), musical activity in the new country was vibrant and innovative. The 19th-century generation of composers including Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Borodin was dead, and the

new generation, including Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, and Prokofiev, was pursuing careers in the West. The revolution increased artistic innovation and experimentation, and the Peoples Commissariat of Public Education established a bureaucracy to control arts education and subsidization in 1917. This bureaucracy, overseen by the playwright Anatol Lunacharsky, was managed by progressive artists such as the abstractionist artist Vassili Kandinsky, later named Commissar of the Fine Arts in Moscow, and the modernist composer Arthur Lourié, Commissar of Music, who was also chief advisor to Lunacharsky. The progressive artistic environment was due in part to the tastes of the Bolshevik intelligentsia, tastes which Lunacharsky personally held.[1] The dynamic political and artistic environment would, however, generate differing factions each struggling to direct the cultural policies of the new communist society.

The Proletkult

Shortly before the first 1917 revolution, a movement began in Petrograd, which ensured a proletarian[2] voice in the new Soviet culture. The Proletarian Cultural-

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[1] Anatol Lunacharsky described himself as an "...Intellectual among the Bolsheviks, Bolshevik among the intelligentsia..." and was charged with carrying out the tasks of educating the masses, winning the confidence of the artistic community, and convincing the political leaders that support of the arts was an integral part of mass education. His success came from his persuasive and noncombative personality serving as a liaison between the artists and politicians. Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia Enlarged Edition 1917-1981*, 11.

[2] Definitions of the Proletariat vary from usage, however in the early development of the Soviet Union, Engels' definition was principally intended. "The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labor -- hence, on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the 19th century...The Proletariat originated in the industrial revolution, which took place in England in the last half of the last (18th) century, and which has since then been repeated in all the civilized countries of the world." Frederich Engels, *Principles of Communism*, trans by Max

Educational Organizations (*proletarskie kul'turno-prosvetitel'ne organizatsii*) or Proletkult began as a loose coalition of clubs including factory committees, workers theaters, and educational societies. By 1918 it had expanded into a national movement designed "to define a unique proletarian culture that would inform and inspire the new society,"[3] and the Proletkult clashed with the Communist Party because of its goal of complete proletarian dominance. Bolshevik Aleksandr Bogdanov lead the Proletkult to establish a working-class cultural ideology and intelligentsia where non-proletarian artists, teachers, and experts were limited to minor roles. In this Proletarian intelligentsia, Western-European contemporaneous artistic endeavors were labeled "bourgeois" and rejected by the worker-centered movement.

> In their search for unique proletarian forms many participants brusquely rejected artistic paths that they associated with alien classes. Platon Kerzhentsev, the theater expert was sharp critic of the "bourgeois" opera and ballet, sentiments echoed in some Proletkult publications. Boris Krasin of Moscow worried that workers would be corrupted by the "petty bourgeois"...[4]

The Proletkult coined the pejorative "futurism," given to artistic movements originating in the West, and this label became part of the "formalist" etymology used by censors in future artistic unions (i.e. Union of Soviet Composers, Union of Soviet Artists, etc.).

> Proletkult ... critics saved their most vicious attacks for "futurism," a blanket term indiscriminately (and inaccurately) applied to impressionism, cubism,

Bedacht (Chicago: Daily Worker Publishing Co., 1925), 503.

3 Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), xvii.

4 Ibid., 144.

> nonfigurative artistic forms, and various types of literary and theatrical experiments. These styles were rejected not because they were new but because they were old; they had begun before the revolution and were promoted by "bourgeois artists," which made them unsuitable forms for the proletariat. A recurrent theme in Proletkult criticism was that futuristic forms were too difficult for workers to comprehend. "First and foremost, as the positive sum of collective sensibilities, feelings, and experiences, wrote the intellectual Ilia Trainin, "proletarian art is clear and understandable to everyone. Art could not claim to be collective if the collective could not grasp it.[5]

Theater, poetry, and music became part of the worker's culture, however a lack of competent teachers forced the workers to run the drama, art, and music studios themselves. Trained artists were attracted to the Proletkult, although the artists' goals were often stylistically different from those of the Proletariat..

> The Proletkult also attracted a small but influential group of avant-garde artists who were determined to break with the stylistic conventions of bourgeois art and culture. This trend was most noticeable in the visual art, where important groups rejected "easel art" and "museum art altogether and devised programs to unify cultural creation with factory production. Experimental theater, which turned against realistic methods, and experimental music, where artists devised new tonal systems, also gained small followings. Here the definition of proletarian culture was largely oppositional; these creations, in theory at least, marked a radical departure from pre-revolutionary artistic schools.[6]

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[5] Ibid., 145-46. Quoted from: I Trainin, "Proletarskoe iskusstvo I futurizm," *Zarevo zavodov*, 2 (1919) 36.

[6] Ibid., 123.

Composers including Arsenii Avraamov (1886-1944), Nikolai Roslavets (1881-1944),[7] and Nikolai Myaskovsky (1881-1950) were supported by the Proletkult intelligentsia's encouragement of experimental composition performances.

> . . . a vocal minority in the movement was convinced that revolutionary messages needed innovative modes of expression. They sought new formal methods that would distinguish their creative products from those of others classes. In the field of music, for example, the Moscow Proletkult opened a small scientific and technical sector where experimental musicians like Arsenii Avraamov and Nikolai Roslavets worked to create a seventeen-note scale. They also studied the use of industrial objects as instruments, anticipating the concerts of factory whistles sponsored in part by the Proletkult during the 1923 celebration of the revolution.[8]

The Association for Contemporary Music

The Association for Contemporary Music (*Assosiatsiia sovremennoi muzyki:* ASM) was established in Moscow in 1923 by composers including Vissarion Shebalin (1902-1963), Victor Belayev (1888-1968), Pavel Lamm (1882-1951), and Nikolai Roslavets (1881-1944). A proposal to affiliate the ASM with the London-based International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) was rejected by the Soviet government; nevertheless, collaboration between the ASM and ISCM resulted in performances of modern Soviet composers' works in Western Europe at ISCM festivals

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[7] George Perle has classified Roslavets' compositional system similar to that of Scriabin as "nondodecaphonic serial composition," yielding what were dubbed "futuristic" compositions. George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), 41.

[8] Mally, 147.

(e.g. Prokofiev at the 1923 Salzburg festival, Miaskovsky at the 1926 Zurich festival) and performance of Western European composers' works in Moscow. The Moscow ASM-sponsored concerts featured the music of a wide variety of composers including Prokofiev, Lev Knipper, Vladimir Kriukov, Vissaron Shebalin, Paul Hindemith, Bela Bartok, and Eric Satie.[9]

The ASM disseminated ideas first through the journal *Muzikal'naya kul'tura* (Musical Culture), with Roslavets serving as chief editor, and later through the journal *Sovremennaya Muzyka* (Contemporary Music).[10] Both journals covered national and international music with critical analyses and commentary, and their intellectually progressive critics maintained a high level of writing and scholarship recognized by their Western-European counterparts.

The progressive nature of the ASM made it vulnerable to criticism of its "bourgeois" tendencies by the Association of Proletarian Musicians (*RAPM*), founded in 1928.[11] Because of the RAPM's influence during this period, the Moscow Conservatory

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9 Lev Knipper and Vladimir Kriukov were considered "avant-gardists," Knipper influenced by German modernism and Kriukov a disciple of Alexander Scriabin. Schwarz, 50.

10 *Muzikal'naya kul'tura* was published only three times in 1924. Statements such as "After having become the dominating class, the proletariat is by no means obliged ...to create a class culture and class art of its own. On the contrary, it struggles just for...clearing the way for future non-class culture" were perceived as heretical by the Proletariat intelligentsia. Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, p. 28.

11 The Association of Proletarian Musicians was formed in 1928. "The opponents in the proletarian camp vowed to "unmask the bourgeois character of Roslavetz and his ilk, to isolate him ideologically from the Soviet musical scene and thus to protect society from the destructive influence of such 'theorists'." Roslavetz was described as "the rotten product of bourgeois society" and the exponent of petit-bourgeois reaction hiding behind leftist phraseology." Schwarz, 54.

was musically criticized and reinvented by Proletarian non-musicians.[12] As a member of the ASM, Nikolai Roslavets' music was labeled "counterrevolutionary" and "genuinely bourgeois ideological" by the RAPM. As a result, he was ostracized from Moscow's musical intelligentsia and relocated to Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1929.[13]

The Proletkult movement disbanded in 1932, and its decline actually began during the first year of the New Economic Policy in 1928. The Soviet government saw no need for a non-governmental organization to compete with the Communist Party and the later artistic Congresses on the subject of musical ideology. Internal and external forces brought about the end of both the Proletkult and the ASM thereby altering the direction of composition within the Soviet Union.[14] Socialist 'realism' originated in Proletkult

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12 This was the period during which the Moscow Conservatory was renamed the Felix Kon School of Higher Musical Education, after the editor of the newspaper *Rabochaya gazeta*, the Workers' Gazette. A non-musician, Boleslaw Przybyszewski, the doctrinaire Marxist son of the Polish decadent writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski, was installed as rector. The composers Myaskovsky, Gliere, and Gnesin, stalwarts of the old, pre-revolutionary musical elite, were denounced and fired from the faculty. Grades and examinations were abolished, and admission restricted to students of acceptable class background. Ideologists of the RAPM like the young Yuriy Keldish consigned the composers of the past wholesale to the dustbin of history, excepting only Beethoven, the voice of the French revolution, and Musorgsky, the proto-Bolshevist "radical democrat." Chaikovsky, virtual court composer to Tsar Alexander III, was a special target of abuse. Composers were exhorted to spurn all styles and genres that had flourished under the Tsars and cultivate instead the only authentically proletarian genre, the marchlike *mossovava pesnya*, the "mass song," through which proletarian ideology could be aggressively disseminated. The only politically correct concept of authorship was collective, epitomized in the so-called Prokoll (*Proizvodstvenniïy kollektiv*), a group of Moscow Conservatory students who banned together to produce revolutionary operas and oratorios that were in essence medleys of mass songs. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 512.

13 This was common practice for the ostracism of dissidents. "Lacking information, rumors develop. He [Roslavets] was said to have been exiled to Siberia and to have died there; this version, in fact, is offered (as an "unconfirmed report") in *Die Musik in geschichte und Gegenwart*. The truth appears to be that he was pressured, like many fellow composers in the 1920s, to leave the main centers of Moscow and Leningrad for the provinces, where he collected folk music and helped to develop local music institutions." Detlef Gojowy, "Half Time for Nikolai Roslavets," *Russian and Soviet Music: Essays for Boris Schwarz* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 215.

14 In contrast to Stalinism of the 1930s, the Central Committee openly supported "...free competition of various groups and movements..." in the June 1925 resolution "On the Policy of the Communist Party in the Field of Literature." Hakobian, p. 40.

theory despite the progressive goals and directives of the movement.

> After dissolving the many contentious groups that had dominated Soviet cultural life, the regime began to formulate an official Soviet aesthetic, "socialist realism." This elusive genre bore some similarities to Proletkult cultural theories. Like Bogdanov, the shapers of socialist realism believed that art served an active social role. They also insisted that cultural creation be simple, clear, and easily accessible to the masses, characteristics that echoed at least part of the Proletkult's artistic platform during the Civil War. But at this point similarities ended. Proletkultists believed that culture in the broadest sense was a means to awaken creative independence and to express proletarian class consciousness. By contrast, the advocates of socialist realism saw art as a didactic medium through which to educate the toiling masses in the spirit of socialism. Either implicitly or explicitly, they rejected the premise of a unique class culture that spoke to and for the proletariat.
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> Instead, socialist realism was intended to convey the values of all groups in Soviet society. Its purpose was to give "poetic shape to the spiritual experience of the socialist man who is now coming into being," to quote Bukharin's effusive phrase. Proletkultists had always maintained that their ultimate goal was to create the foundation for a human culture transcending class boundaries; proletarian class culture was necessary as the penultimate step before that final end. Now socialist realism claimed to have achieved this classless ideal. The new aesthetic was presented as the expression of a new and more advanced stage of historical development, a move toward a classless society. The state's adoption of this new direction turned proletarian culture, supposedly the harbinger of the future, into the culture of the past.[15]

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[15] Mally, 250-51.

The 1932 Resolution and Union of Soviet Composers

On April 23, 1932 the Resolution "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations" ended an era of artistic factions with the first *Perestroika*.[16] Artistic regimentation and conformity under centralized cultural unions replaced factions between the Proletariat and Bolshevik intelligentsia of the preceding decades. The Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP), Association of Revolutionary Russian Artists (AkhRR), and RAPM, and were liquidated and replaced by the Union of Soviet Writers, Union of Soviet Artists, and Union of Soviet Composers in 1932. The first All-Union Congress of Soviet writers was held in 1934 where Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948), representative of the Communist Party, defined the goal of socialist realism "to depict reality in its revolutionary development.[17] The Union of Soviet Composers' journal *Sovetskaya muzyka* had previously defined "Socialist Realism" in the article "On the Problem of Socialist Realism in Music:"

> The main attention of the Soviet composer must be directed towards the victorious progressive principles of reality, towards all that is heroic, bright, and beautiful. This distinguishes the spiritual world of Soviet man and must be embodied in musical images full of beauty and strength. Socialist Realism demands an implacable struggle against folk-negating modernistic directions that are typical of the decay of contemporary bourgeois art, against subservience and servility towards modern bourgeois culture.[18]

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16 From *perestroyit'sya na khodu*, Russian for "changing course midstream" Taruskin, 511.

17 Schwarz, 110.

18 Ibid., 114.

"Modernistic directions" evolved into "formalism," a term indicating artistic formulae employed by composers, writers, and artists that challenged the non-musicians[19] within the cultural unions who were in charge of criticism and judgement of the artists' works.[20]

Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, and Andrei Zhdanov influenced the newly-formed Composers Union in the 1930s. After a successful tour of the Soviet Union in 1927 featuring the *Classical Symphony* and the Suite from the *Three Oranges*, Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1933 . However, the more cerebral works, performed upon his return, including the *Fifth Piano Concerto,* the *Overture, Op. 42,* and the *Quintet, Op. 39* received a cool response from audiences and critics alike.[21] The 1934 Leningrad premiere of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was hailed as a triumph of the new Soviet culture, and Andrei Zhdanov became Communist Party spokesman to the Writers' Congress, following Sergei Kirov's (leader of the Communist Party in Leningrad) assassination in Leningrad, on December 1, 1934. Thus began the artistic and cultural "Zhdanov Era" (*Zhdanovshchina*) establishing artistic controls within the Soviet Union, where artists' popular and fiscal success was governed ultimately by the

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19 On the term "formalism" Prokofiev once quipped: "Formalism is music that people don't understand at first hearing." Schwarz, p. 115.

20 Mstislav Rostropovich would address this issue pointedly in his "Open Letter to Pravda:" "But explain to me please, why in our literature and art so often people absolutely incompetent in this field have the final word? *New York Times* (November 16, 1970), 37.

21 Prokofiev's ability to write "accessible" music was evident in the opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, written for the conservative Chicago audience. He wrote in his biography: "In the Soviet Union music is addressed to millions of people who formerly had little or no contact with music. It is this new mass audience that the modern Soviet composer must strive to reach...The masses want great music...they understand more than some composers think...I consider it a mistake to strive for simplification." Sergei Prokofiev, *Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, Trans. By R. Prokofieva (London: Central Books, 1960), 106.

Communist Party Central Committee.

Although Prokofiev's Soviet return was due to homesickness, he continued ardent support of progressive composition.[22] After Prokofiev regained Soviet citizenship in 1934, he wrote more "accessible" works for the proletarian audience including *Lieutenant Kije* (1934), the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1935-36), and *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), and despite the success of these works, he was not insulated from criticism of his *Fifth Piano Concerto* (1932) and his opera *Semyon Koto* (1940). After his return to Moscow in 1934, Prokofiev taught post-graduate students at the Moscow State Conservatory where he met Aram Khachaturian and Tikon Khrennikov.[23]

With the premiere of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* Shostakovich received critical praise from the Communist Party intelligentsia who heralded the opera as a testament to the cultural tenets fostered by the socialist bureaucracy: "Such an opera could have been written only by a Soviet composer brought up in the best traditions of Soviet culture. . . [Shostakovich has] torn off the masks and exposed the false and lying methods of the composers of bourgeois society. . ."[24] Two years later during the first great purge, *Pravda* published an attack on *Lady Macbeth*, entitled "Chaos Instead of Music" (January 28, 1936), followed one week later by another article attacking Shostakovich's

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22 Confiding to French critic, Serge Moreux, in 1923, "The air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian, and there is nothing more harmful to me than to live in exile...I must immerse myself in the atmosphere of my homeland...I must hear Russian speech and talk with the people dear to me. This will give me what I lack here, for their songs are my songs...I'm afraid of falling into academicism." Schwarz, p. 118.

23 Khrennikov eventually devoted most of his time to administration as Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Composers, and oversaw control of the Soviet musical ed aesthetic from 1948-74.

24 Victor Seroff, *Dmitri Shostakovich* (New York: Knopf, 1943), 197.

ballet *The Limpid Stream*. Both unsigned articles appeared to be official Party decrees, and it was later learned that the articles were written on instructions from the Party's Central Committee. The directive appears to be from Stalin himself, who attended the opera and found the subject matter repugnant and in opposition to his personal opinion of what contemporary Soviet opera should be.[25] He believed that Soviet opera should include a libretto with a socialist topic, a nationalistic musical language, and a positive socialist hero.[26] Shostakovich endured further criticism in his *Fourth Symphony*, to which he later appeased the newspaper *Pravda*, the Composers Union, and ultimately the Communist Party Central Committee with the *Fifth Symphony*, subtitled "A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism," and he continued to fall in and out of favor with the Communist Party until his death in 1975.

With the beginning of Stalinist purge in 1934, marked by the assassination of Alexi Kirov, Andrei Zhdanov established firm control of the Soviet culture by codifying the "realist" doctrine and enforcing retaliation for evasion and defiance of this doctrine. Stalin set the tone for the cultural purges Zhdanov would carry out in a speech belittling the

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[25] A similar incident occurred during a visit by Khruschev to the Manezh Gallery in Moscow in 1962. "One room of the exhibition was devoted to abstract art by Russian artists, virtually the first time such work, which violates the official canons of "socialist realism," had been put on public display...Khruschev harshly condemned most of the works he viewed...Censorship of literature and the arts reflects not merely the political sensitivities of the authorities but their level of taste. Khruschev's reaction to the Manezh exhibit may have been politically calculated, but in addition it was probably the heartfelt cry of a man of minimal formal education and cultural refinement faced with examples of avant-garde art. Given his age and background, his standard of taste was predictably limited to the realistic, strictly representational style enshrined in "socialist realism." Since Soviet censorship on the whole is exercised not by artists or professional critics but by bureaucrats, their standards, too, are bound to be conventional, routine, and safe. Such individuals find it difficult to understand abstract art, with all its indirectness, suggestiveness, and playfulness. They not only dislike it but fear that it might harbor subversive sentiments they may not be able to discern..." Marshall S Shatz, *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 143.

[26] Schwarz, 123.

capitalist world and its excesses on February 9, 1946. The era known as *Zhdanovshchina* began in August 1946 when he began to enforce the new cultural policies. This was a task he was perfectly suited to perform.

> . . . When he was put in charge of the ideological front, in 1946, he was determined to make a clean sweep. Cultured and well-educated, cold and ruthless, Zhdanov had the fanaticism of conviction. He did not shrink from anything that could help him achieve his aims which he believed to be in the best interest of his Party and his country. He resorted to abuse, insinuations, threats, even flattery if need be. He knew the intelligentsia; he was aware of the secret divisions, the hidden jealousies, the artistic foibles. He exploited the resentments of the young and the unrecognized against the "establishment." Whatever he did, he always posed as the protector of true Russo-Socialist art.[27]

The four ideological resolutions concerning culture enacted by the Communist Party Central Committee include: "Resolution on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*" concerning literature; "On Repertoire of the Dramatic Theaters and Measures for its Improvement;" "On the film *Bolshaya Zhizn*;" and on February 10, 1948 "On the Opera *Velikaya Druzhba* by V. Muradeli." Zhdanov was directly responsible for the literary resolution, which set the tone for the others: "Any preaching of 'art for art's sake'. . . is harmful to the interests of the Soviet people and the Soviet state."[28] . The resolutions corrected 'anti-proletariat' cultural shortcomings and served as warnings for potential dissidents. Zhdanov died on August 31, 1948, but the Marxist-Leninist "realist" or "anti-

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[27] Schwarz, 205.

[28] George S. Counts and Nucia Lodges, *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control*, (Boston: 1949), 81.

formalist" canon he created influenced the Soviet ideology until Perestroika in 1988 as the official definition of formalism reflects.

> Formalism, a predominant attention to form over content in various areas of human activity. . . In the history of art, formalism has been manifested in a separation of form from content, in the assertion that form is the only valuable element in art, and accordingly, in a view that the artist's perception accounts solely to the abstract creation of form. Formalism emerged at a time when social conditions engendered among various social groups an attitude that favored the opposing of art to life, to practical activity, and to people's true interests. Formalist trends were apparent in 19th-century academicism, but formalism was manifested most consistently in such trends of 20th-century bourgeois art as cubism, cubo-futurism, dadaism, *lettrisme*, abstract art, pop art and op art, anti-theater, and the theater of the absurd. Formalism has thus proved to be one of the manifestations of the crisis in the bourgeois consciousness. . . Marxist-Leninist aesthetics has shown that the formalist neglect of content undermines the social usefulness of art and art's ability to participate in the social struggle and in education. Marxist-Leninist aesthetics has also emphasized that formalism has a destructive effect on the aesthetic values of art itself.[29]

The Khrennikov Era

The first All-Union Congress of Composers took place April 19-25, 1948 in Moscow to serve as a national music convention of delegates from all of the Soviet Republics. Tikhon Khrennikov (b. 1913) began his term as General Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Composers, representing the cultural direction Zhdanov established and

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[29] "Formalism," *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedija*, 27 (Moscow: Sovetskaia Entsiklopedija Publishing House, 1977), 299. Trans. *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, (London: Macmillan, 1981).

remaining at that post until 1989 despite changes and relaxations in cultural policies in 1958 and 1962, and consolidated his position with attacks against 'formalism' in music, both foreign or domestic. Although he capitalized on opportunities to host foreign bourgeois composers and musicians including the expatriate Stravinsky, Pietro Argento, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, André Jolivet, Roy Harris, Luigi Nono, and Roger Sessions, Khrennikov often criticized them first in speeches and decrees.

> One can hardly name a single important composer of the West who is not infected with formalistic defects, subjectivism, and mysticism, and bereft of ideological principles. Thus, Hindemith, Krenek, Berg, Britten, Messiaen, Menotti, Max Brandt all favor a conglomeration of wild harmonies, a reversion to primitive savage cultures . . . Eroticism, sexual perversion, amorality, and the shamelessness of the contemporary bourgeois heroes of the twentieth century."[30]

Khrennikov articulated the hard-line position of the Composer's Union with decisive rhetoric, and took every opportunity to promote those composers he could control.

> A shining proof of the fruitfulness of the realistic path is the Sinfonietta by Vainberg. As a composer, Vainberg was strongly influenced by modernistic music which badly mangled his undoubted talent. Turning to the sources of Jewish folk music, Vainberg created a bright, optimistic work dedicated to the theme of the shining, free working life of the Jewish people in the land of Socialism. . . .[31]

For progressive composers however, Khrennikov remained unflinching in his disdain for 'formalist composers,' especially those who were performed outside of the

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[30] Slonimsky, *Music Since 1900*, 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, 1971), 691-99. Schwarz, 225.

[31] *Sovetska Muzyka* I (1948), 28. In Schwarz, 295.

Soviet Union.

> Those who organize all sorts of avant-garde festivals, having received , by hook or by crook, some newly written scores from some of our sensation-seeking composers, put them immediately on their programs and present them as the last word in Soviet music. These composers (incidentally, members of our Union whose music is played in our country more frequently than it deserves) are declared 'unofficial composers', allegedly oppressed in the Soviet Union.[32]

Khrennikov's most virulent attack against progressive composers occurred following a festival of Soviet music in Cologne entitled "Encounter with the Soviet Union." The festival featured the music of Edison Denisov (1929-96), Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), Vyacheslav Artyomov (b. 1940), Viktor Suslin (b. 1942), Alexander Knaifel (b. 1943), Dmitry Smirnov (b. 1948), and Elena Firsova (b. 1950), who as a result would become known as the "Khrennikov Seven." Khrennikov deemed that the festival inaccurately represented the music of the Soviet Union because of the proportion of avant garde compositions performed.

> From Khrennikov's point of view, the Cologne festival was totally unrepresentative of Soviet music. Shostakovich was the only major composer included; the rest were repudiated composers of the 1920's or non-conformist composers of the 1960's and 1970's. But to the sophisticated West German public, it was precisely the "non-conformist" angle that was most attractive. The program was designed by Detlef Gojowy, a West German expert on Soviet music with a particular interest in the 1920's. There were six concerts in three days (23, 24, and 25 March 1979) sponsored by the West German Radio, thus insuring a wide

[32] Schwarz, 622-3.

> audience on the air. There were no fewer than twenty-six German premières, among them "discoveries of the first order". The critic of the journal *Musica* was particularly impressed by Denisov's Double Concerto, a work of "extreme difficulty and vast wealth of content...containing many cadenzas, some glitteringly colorful, some shaped like micro-melodies, contrasted with the rich orchestration". (The concerto was composed especially for the flutist Aurèle Nicolet and the oboist Heinz Holliger, who played the world première.) Denisov's song cycle *La vie en rouge* revealed "biting sarcasm, mourning nostalgia, inner calm, and legendary fortitude". . . [33]

Official restitution and reinstatement in the musical environment for the 'Khrennikov Seven" came five years later when works of the 'Great Three' of the Soviet avant garde (Denisov, Gubaidulina, and Schnittke) were performed in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory under the Direction of Gennady Rozhdestvensky, despite limited party opposition.

Perestroika and the Association of Modern Music

With the economic and cultural reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, the artistic Unions lost unilateral control of the arts. In response a group of young composers including Dmitry Smirnov, Victor Ekimovsky, Alexander Vustin, Yelena Fisnova, Nikolai Korndorf, Vladimir Tarnopolsky, Alexander Raskatov, and Yuri Kasparov re-instituted the Association of Modern Music which had been disbanded in 1932. Edison Densiov, president of the new AMM, articulated the goal of the

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[33] Ibid., 625-26.

organization:

> The AMM unites different composers who have nothing in common as regards the manner of their writing. Each composes in a style he likes. In my view, all similar associations should be based primarily on human empathy, mutual respect and the right to express oneself in one's own language.[34]

The AMM lasted only five years, until 1995, when the members agreed that it had fulfilled it's purpose of fostering individuality from the support of collegiality and professional contacts.

[34] Kholopov and Tsenova, 29.

CHAPTER 3

THE MUSIC OF EDISON DENISOV

The repercussions for ignorance of the "anti-formalist" doctrine of the Stalinist intelligentsia, caused the majority of Soviet composers, seeking professional advancement, to create works reflecting "Soviet Realism." Edison Denisov, a dissident avant gardist, ignored the directives of Stalin's Soviet 'realism,' and developed an individual style and language of composition rewarded by his colleagues abroad rather than within the Soviet Union; however, Denisov's progressive compositions antagonized the status quo of the Union of Composers. Furthermore, provincial bureaucrats labeled Denisov's music as "formalist" and "subversive" because restrictions on his creative process could not be externally controlled. Marshall Shatz, in *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective*, maintains that it is the combination of uneducated bureaucratic control, adjudication, and censorship that creates a dissident:

> Under Soviet conditions, however, literature does not merely attract dissidents, it generates them; for the amount of creative liberty granted to it, though greater than in some other endeavors, has strict limits. The very nature of his work propels the writer into a head-on confrontation with the control apparatus of the state through the latter's exercise of censorship. Not only may the writer's art be subjected to mutilation or outright suppression but it is at the mercy of people whose literary judgement he cannot accept, namely, bureaucrats. Censorship thwarts his creative impulses – and hence his very personality – and at the same time humiliates him by subjecting him to the dictates of individuals who are less knowledgeable, less

imaginative, less sensitive than he feels himself to be.[1]

Development of a personal musical vocabulary led to Denisov's recognition outside the Soviet Union through publication and performance of his works, and this recognition - albeit because of his novelty as a "Soviet avant garde" composer[2] - further enhanced his dissident status. Unlike Shostakovich or Prokofiev, who "were able to perform clever balancing acts, pushing the authorities to the limits and then mollifying them with a mellifluous piece of populism,[3]" Denisov composed primarily in the progressive or avant garde language, with the exception of some film scores and conservatory works. From his student days at the Moscow conservatory, Denisov continued to adapt and develop a "polystylistic"[4] musical language. His compositional career can be divided into four periods: student period until the conclusion of postgraduate study at the Moscow Conservatory (to 1959); experimentation with modern compositional methods (1960-64); codification of personal style (1964-78); and stabilization of style (1978-96).[5]

Early Compositions Prior to Study at the Moscow Conservatory

While Denisov was enrolled in mathematics at the University of Tomsk, he

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1 Marshall S. Shatz, *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective*, 1980, 141.

2 Denisov noted the Western-European ignorance of young Soviet avant garde composers in "The New Technique is Not a Fashion, *Rinàscita*, (August, 1966).

3 Andrew J. Horton, "The Forgotten Avant Garde: Soviet Composers Crushed by Stalin," *Central Europe Review* 1:1, (June 1999).

4 The eclectic style characterized by quotation of and allusion to other composers and compositional schools, is evidenced by use of dodecaphony, serialism, aleatorism, microtonalism, and atonality. See Alfred Schnittke's "Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music," *Music in the USSR* (April/June 1978), 24.

5 See *Edison Denisov* by Yuri Kholopov and Valerie Tsenova, 39.

studied the works of Shostakovich and Glinka at the Tomsk Music College and produced his first compositions. These song settings of lyric poetry were imitative of the works he studied, and he used the poems of Alexander Blok, Alexander Pushkin, Zinaida Gippius, and Heinrich Heine set to music in the style of Scriabin, Chopin, and Prokofiev. His first work for chamber ensemble was an orchestration of the gavotte from his *Classical Suite* (1949) for two pianos, and his most striking early work is his comic scene *Failure*, after Anton Checkov, for four vocalists.

Denisov's correspondence with Shostakovich, beginning in 1948, provided the novice with professional criticism from the venerable composer. Denisov sent copies of his orchestrated gavotte from the *Classical Suite*, *Songs on poems by Alexander Blok*, the comic scene *Failure*, *Minuet for Oboe and Piano*, and *Suite for Orchestra and Chorus* to Shostakovich who responded with copious notes and suggestions.[6]

Student Period: Works Written until the Conclusion of Study at the Moscow Conservatory

In 1957 Denisov entered the Moscow Conservatory on Shostakovich's advice, where he studied composition with Vissarion Shebalin, who introduced him to the works of Stravinsky, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Berg, and other "formalist" composers. At the Conservatory many of his works such as the *Piano Trio in D minor* (1954) and *String Quartet No. 1* (1957), retained a strong influence from Shostakovich. The largest work from this period is his *Symphony in C Major* (1955). Written in traditional form, tonality,

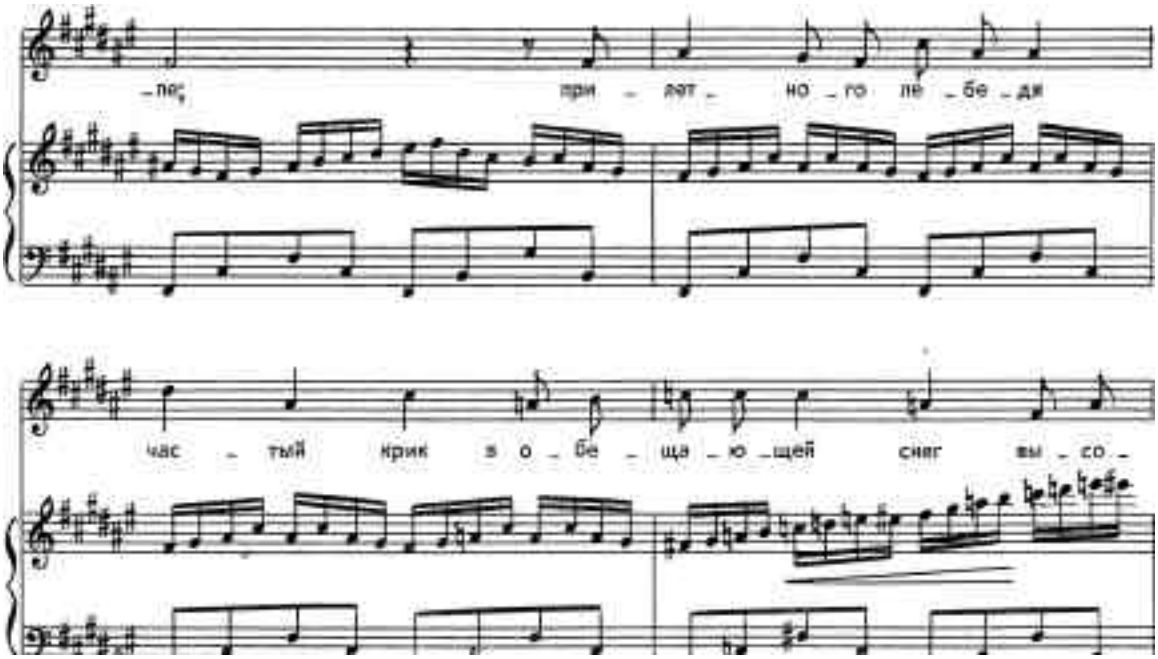
6 Ibid., 168-9.

and orchestration, the *Symphony* served as one of his graduation pieces in 1956, with the second and third movements performed at the composition department's graduation concert. His opera, *Ivan the Soldier* (1956), based upon a fairy tale by Afanasyev, was a four-year project that included folk motives recorded during his conservatory expeditions to the Kursk, Altai, and Tomsk regions of the Soviet Union. This tonal opera is structured in an arch form, climaxing in the third scene with a large crowd scene, written in rondo form. The *Symphony in C*, the first act of *Ivan the Soldier*, and with the progressive song-cycle, *Nocturnes on Poems by Bo Tzu-i* (1954) were used as examination pieces for Denisov's graduation jury. He was unanimously passed with "excellent" marks, and five days later was recommended for membership in the Union of Soviet Composers by Shostakovich.

The most progressive work written during this period, *Nocturnes on Poems by Bo Tzu-I*, displays embryonic polyrhythmic, polymodal, octatonic, and tone-painting devices[7] (see Example 1.).

[7] The 1980 printed version appears as a revision in 1954, coinciding with the Soviet Union's acknowledgement of China as a fellow communist state. (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompozitor, 1980).

Example 1. "Sad Wanderer," from *Nocturnes on Poems by Bo Tzu-I*, measures 5-8.



The first review appeared in the *Sovetsky Muzykant* (Soviet Musician) by V. P. Bobrovsky, chair of music theory at the Moscow Conservatory, and notes that Denisov, not the work,[8] exhibits "fine artistic taste but recommend that the young composer should not indulge in this genre, and depart from modern themes."[9] Criticism of Denisov's progressive compositional language began at this point and continued throughout the remainder of his career.

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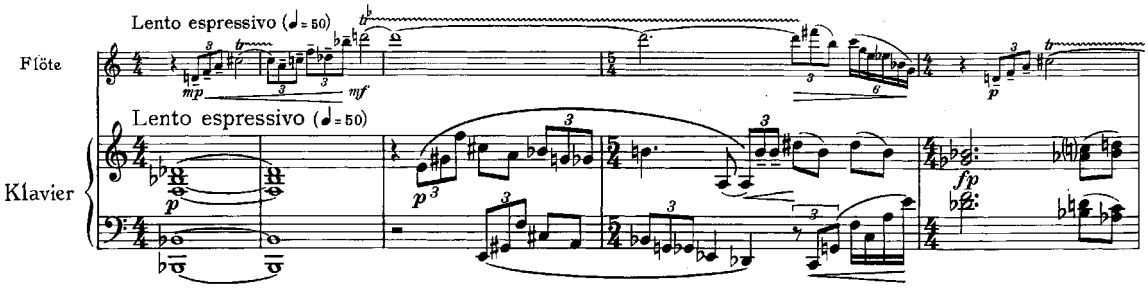
8 It is common for many critical reviews in the *Sovetskaja Muzyka* and *Muzykalnaya* to address the composer directly. This particular article is unusual because the author's name is given. Later, many of the critical reviews of Denisov's works or essays were printed giving credit to "the author." For an example, see Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 463.

9 Kholopov and Tsenova, 13.

Experimentation with Compositional Methods

From 1959 to 1964, after postgraduate studies, Denisov studied 20th-century compositional practice through analyses of the works of Stravinsky, Bartok, Debussy, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg.[10] Tonal organization using polymodality and polytonality in *Bagatelles* (1960) is Denisov's first step in polystructural organization of his works. The *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1960) displays not only polystructural organization; but, through polytonality, leans toward dodecaphony. The combined use of the B-flat minor tonality in the piano and the D-minor tonality in the flute, with a C-sharp to D trill (enharmonically alluding to D-flat) in the opening measure, gives way to an eleven-note tone row in the third measure, cadences bitonally on a G-flat cadence in measure five (see Example 2).

Example 2. *Sonate für Flöte und Klavier*, measures 1-5.



This type of 'pantonality'[11] leads directly to Denisov's use of the serial method, learned

10 Many analyses of Stravinsky's and Alexander Goedike's works were presented as papers during Union of Soviet Composers meetings or printed in the *Sovetsky Kompozitor* and *Vechernaya Moskova*. Ibid. 222-23.

11 Denisov refers to polytonality as "pantonality." See: Edison Denisov, "New Music and Jazz," *World of Music.* 10/3 (1968), 30-37.

through study of the Darmstdat composers in his *Music for Eleven Wind Instruments and Percussion* and *Piano Variations,* both composed in 1961. In the *Music for Eleven Wind Instruments*, Denisov organizes three movements in a *Allegro, Scherzo*, *Adagio* sonata-movement form, with homophonic outer movements a fugal scherzo in between. According to fellow Soviet composer Alfred Schnittke, the *Music for Eleven Wind Instruments* is a more successful dodecaphonic work than the *Variations* because of its "lapidary piano part."[12]

Codification of Personal Style

The cantata *Sun of the Incas for Soprano and Eleven Instruments,* written and premiered in 1964, exhibits tonal and textural components found in the expressionistic works *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Le Marteau sans Maître.* The choice of Gabriela Mistral's text, organized by form and shape not linear action, allowed Denisov to maintain expressive balance between the soprano and instruments by retaining the text's "'vocalism,' meaning the natural use of full abilities (pitch and timbre) of the human voice . . . Not blurred by ingenuity of intonation."[13] This individual independence of the vocal component allowed the six-part structure of the cycle to include purely vocal and instrumental movements. Liberal use of serial technique creates what Alfred Schnittke labels "improvised tonality"[14] whereby specific and implicit notation creates a tonal and

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12 Alfred Schnittke, "Edison Denisow," *Res Facta*, trans. Szymon Januszkiewicz. 6 (1972), 109-25.
13 Ibid., 113.
14 Ibid., 114.

metric improvisation. Denisov considered rhythmic determinacy and indeterminacy an essential tool for the modern composer, and in "New Music and Jazz," Denisov states:

> Many composers of our time complain that the superfluous rhythmic refinement of the musical texture too often leads to rhythmic amorphousness and that the music loses its impulsive and dynamic tension; the incessant fluctuations of the rhythm, with its extreme complexity, and consequently the inability of the ordinary listener to grasp the inner logic of the development considerably complicate the very perception of many works of contemporary music. Naturally, jazz does not in any way provide a recipe for rescuing music from rhythmic amorphousness, but it shows one of the possible paths towards a greater variety in the rhythmic organization of the musical material. The appearance of a more organized chain of rhythmic structures in one of the dimensions presents an incentive for facilitating the perception of the musical information, an opportunity for "clarifying the form".[15]

With the success of the *Sun of the Incas*, Denisov codified his compositional language, creating a number of works using non-mathematical serial structures. The *Italian Songs on Poems by Alexander Blok* (1964) for soprano, flute, horn, violin, and harpsichord provides a more traditional vocal role, with imitation of the melodic figures maintaining equity of the vocal and instrumental roles. During the coda section of the *Italian Songs*, instrumentalists are directed to perform percussive effects (e.g. key clicks on the flute, bell taps for the horn, tapping on the sound board for the violin, etc.), completely changing the timbre and style of the music. Denisov explains that "this is no longer music, but its "symbol" - a look from the other world (three dead czars rise). Here

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[15] "New Music and Jazz," *World of Music* 10/3 (1968), 32.

the music should not be heard but be seen."[16]

In the orchestral genre, Denisov gained greater exposure through international release of Leonard Bernstein's recording of *Crescendo e Diminuendo* for harpsichord and twelve strings (1965) with the New York Philharmonic. In addition, wider impact was achieved with *Peniture* (1970)[17] through multiplicity of the orchestral texture. The individual division of the strings (i.e. 16 individual first violin parts, 12 individual second violin parts, 10 individual viola parts, etc.) achieved a three-dimensional texture. The affect of *Peniture* elaborates not on the finished musical product (the composition) but the procedure to attain the product (the composition process itself). In the article "In Boris Birger's Pictures I Hear a Purely Musical Expression of Art" Denisov elaborates on the aesthetic which inspired *Peniture*:

> Composition technique - the layout of subjects in space and their interaction - is highly important both in music and painting . . .The creativity of this painter has played an important role in my life and one of my works, *Painting,* for full symphony orchestra (1970) is dedicated to Boris Birger. Here I sought to translate his manner of painting, his colour technique and some general principles of composition into the musical medium.
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> Birger's pictures are figurative, yet I did not aim to represent the plot of his canvases in music and in this respect my *Painting* lacks a concrete programme, though, as in Birger's pictures, the subject is placed in the centre of the musical process, determining both the general composition

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16 Schnittke, Alfred. "Edison Denisow," *Res Facta,* trans. Szymon Januszkiewicz. 6 (1972), 117.

17 *Peniture* was performed alongside Alfred Schnittke's *Dead Souls* and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Violin Concerto* in the first concert of Soviet avant garde music to be performed in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. This concert on April 15, 1982, conducted by Rozhdetsvensky, ended the period of overt persecution of the "Khrennikov Seven" (Soviet avant garde composers labeled as "anti-Russian" and 'formalist') of which Denisov, Schnittke, and Gubaidulina were members.

> and the different stages of development, in which even the secondary movements appear to be subordinate to the culmination point of the composition, which is essentially its plot.[18]

Peniture marks an eight-year period devoted primarily to instrumental music including concertos, chamber, and orchestral music. The seven concertos written from 1968 to 1978 for *flute, oboe, and percussion* (1968), *cello* (1972), *piano* (1972), *flute* (1975), *four Saxophones and percussion* (1977), *violin* (1978), and *flute and oboe* (1978) are not 'showpiece' virtuoso works but are virtuostic because of the extended performance techniques demanded of each soloist. These concertos incorporate large scale organization where individual movements function as components of sonata allegro or rondo forms.[19] In the accompanied and unaccompanied instrumental works composed during this time, Denisov firmly established his artistic voice and vocabulary summarized by Kholopov and Tsenova (1995):

> 1. "Sublime lyricism": euphonious quiet sonorities in high register and slow tempo, often in tender, "caressing" tone colours.
> 2. "Viscous stream' of several voices compressed into a complex polyrhythmic texture and moving prevalently in narrow intervals and in a common direction - a kind of "thickened' endless melody conveying the most intimate emotional nuances.
> 3. "Shooting" or "pricking": sharply accented points separated from each other by pauses of irregular length. Genetically, this device has its roots in the "torn" rhythms of the finale of *The Rite of Spring* and in the mature Webern. In the episodes pertaining to this "genre", the composer

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18 *Music in the USSR*, (Jan/Mar 1990), 32.

19 See Kholopov and Tsenova, 94.

recurs to elements of twelve-tone technique.
4. Pointillistic “splashes” in fast tempo - technically similar to the previous device, though making a smoother effect.
5. Still smoother and faster "rustles" or "rolling tone clusters" played legatissimo, pianissimo, dolcissimo, allegrissimo.
6. Sporadic “static” tone clusters, instants of the so-called Klangmusik (moving masses of sounds in which ear hardly discerns pitches and intervals, the whole being perceived rather as an emancipated tone colour), aleatory (or, in Denisov's own terminology, “mobile elements of musical form”)
7. Occasional direct or deformed quotations from classical music, references to traditional forms and genres (scherzo, chorale) and jazz, sometimes also to the “vulgar” strata of the contemporary sounding milieu.[20]

Stabilization of Mature Style

After the success of the instrumental works of the 1970s, Denisov returned to composing for voice with instrumental accompaniments. The first vocal work composed during this period is the *Blätter* on poems of Francisco Tanzer for soprano and string trio (1978). In this serial work, precise rhythmic notation of extended quarter and three-quarter tone pitch bends, harmonics, and traditional techniques reflect a mature tonal and timbral vocabulary. Other vocal works include *Schmerz und Stille on poems by Osip Mandelstam for mezzo soprano, clarinet, viola, and piano* (1979), *Five Poems by Yevgeny Baratynsky* for voice and piano (1979); and other works on texts by Alexander Pushkin,

[20] For detailed study refer to Kholopov and Tsenova, 33-80.

Attila Josef, and Alexander Blok. Denisov uses a "patchwork score"[21] in his *Au plus haut des cieux d'apres Georges Bataille* for voice and chamber orchestra (1986) to illustrate economy of material in each movement.

Denisov wrote large-scale vocal works from religious and secular texts on ritual subjects beginning with the *Requiem* for soprano, tenor, mixed choir, and orchestra. This work uses texts from Francisco Tanzer's cycle *requiem*, written in three languages English, German, and French, all utilized within the same stanzas.[22] The final *Lux aeterna* employs traditional Latin in a polytonal setting, concluding with a diatonic tonality. After the successful world premiere in Hamburg (1980), the Moscow premier was particularly well-received by younger musicians, who from that time forward referred to Denisov as "the light."[23] Denisov's other large-scale choral/orchestral works include the *Colin et Chloé* suite from the opera *L'écume des jours* for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, chorus, and orchestra (1981), the *Kyrie* for chorus and orchestra in memory of Mozart (1991), *The Story of Life and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ* for tenor, bass, and orchestra (1992), and *Morning Dream after seven Poems of Rose Ausländer* for soprano, mixed chorus, and orchestra (1995).

Denisov wrote three staged works, the operas *L'écume des jours* (1980) and *Les quatre filles* (1986) and the ballet *Confession* (1986) after 24 years of compositions for

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21 Traditionally notated score that does not indicate all instrumental parts until necessary. This arrangement can be found in the scores of Ligeti, Stockhausen, and Crumb.

22 The multilingual stanzas of Tanzer's poetry use lingual equivalents as well as inter-lingual alliteration and assonance (e.g. I. *Anflug des lächeins*: "atmen - breath - respirer;" V. *la croix*: "alone - alleine - seul;" III. *Danse permanente*: "des menschlichen Kalbs - dubious attempts - débrasser").

23 See *Interview with Ekaterina Denisov*, (2000).

the concert hall. In all three, Denisov writes in a lyric style which avoids some of the other rhythmic and sharply-accented mannerisms found in his instrumental works. *L'écume des jours*, based upon Boris Vian's existentialist novel of the same title and with a libretto prepared by Denisov himself, is a lyric drama in three acts and fourteen scenes - a modern *Tristan und Isolde*. Together with the French libretto, Latin texts of the *Credo, Gloria, Agnus Dei,* and *Requiem aeternam* are used in the first and third acts. The opera is reminiscent of the 19th century French tradition employing a duo-character focus, alternation of aria and scenes of daily life, and motto themes. It is noteworthy, however, that Denisov indicates that the vernacular of the country where the opera is performed should be used when staged rather than the original French. In homage to Vian, quotations of Duke Ellington songs occur throughout the opera.[24]

Les quatre filles (1986), composed for a chamber cast of four soloists together with a small chorus, is written for the small theater - much like the chamber operas of Menotti and Weill. Based upon Pablo Picasso's play[25] of the same name, the plot centers on the action of the four girls playing and dancing in a garden in sunshine, rain, and

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24 Boris Vian lived a short life (1920-59) and endeavored in many diverse fields including jazz performance as a trumpet player. All Ellington quotations are mentioned in Vian's novel.

25 *Las Cuatro Muchachas* (1965) was the second surrealist play written by Picasso following his controversial *El deseo cogió por la cola* [*Desire Caught by the Tail*] (1941). Denisov on the origins of *Les quatre filles*: "The idea to write this opera came from . . . Genaddy Rozhdestvensky. He had the idea to give in a concert two operas: *Apollo and Hyacintus* of Mozart and my opera *Four girls*. It is him which gave me the book of Picasso. I did not even know that he had written plays. When I read it, the part appeared very good to me to be put in music. I cut much of the text of Picasso, which was too long and I introduced, to widen the space, a poem of René Char, which is sung at the end of the second scene by the chorus, and two poems of Henri Michaux in the final choruses of the fourth and sixth scenes. This chorus is invisible because it is not on the stage. What touched me in this part of Picasso, it is especially its surrealist side, because there is no subject, there is no intrigue, it is the play of the four girls who engage in rites, filled with completely absurd visions." from: Jean-Pierre Armengaud, *Entretiens avec Denisov: Un compositeur sous le régime soviétique*, (Paris: Editions Plume, 1993), 213-14.

moonlight. Along with the simple childlike behaviors, ritual sacrifice and deceit occur to depict true, immature youthful behavior.

Denisov's ballet *Confession* (1984) is a through-composed three-act ballet in 16 scenes without separate "number" organization. The ballet is based upon Alfred de Musset's novel *La confession d'un enfant du siècle* depicting a young man suffering from 'the sickness of the century' whose symptoms are disappointment, boredom, and loneliness with the acts depicting the stages of recuperation: "sickness," "hope," and "enlightenment."

While researching electronic and acoustic devices at I.R.C.A.M., from September 1990 to March 1991, Denisov wrote *Sur la nappe d'un étang glace* for three groups of instruments and recorded tape, and the only other work of *musique concrète* he wrote was *Birdsong* for prepared piano and magnetic tape (1969).[26] In *Sur la nappe d'un étang glace* the tape serves as a soloist in a concerto with the recorded sounds played through loudspeakers which surround the audience providing an element of spatial variance. While chromatic pitches evolve to 'ecmelnic' tones (indefinite sliding pitches/"pitch slides") Denisov structures the appearance and location of sounds produced by the tape in a sonata-allegro form.

Secure in language and structure, Denisov uses an amalgam of serial and, what Soviet theorists and composers label, polystylism in his mature instrumental works. His *Symphony for Full Orchestra* (1987), premiered and commissioned by L'Orchestre de

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[26] Denisov worked at the Experimental Studio of Electronic Music in Moscow from 1968-70 when the studio was closed because of its "inability to create music for the people."

Paris with Daniel Barenboim conductor, is a large one-hour work in four movements, which exhibit the characteristic "lyric interweaving" of several voices which represent anti-collectivism.[27] Not only in symphonic works, but much of Denisov's chamber music of this period exhibits this characteristic 'lyric interweaving' as well: *Hommage à Pierre* for chamber ensemble (1985), *Piano Quartet* (1987), *Quartet pour flûte et trio à cordes* (1989), etc. The anti-collectivist style continued to permeate his concertos for *Oboe* (1986), *Guitar* (1991), and *Flute, Vibraphone, Harpsichord, and Piano* (1993).

Overall Denisov's music predominantly features texture over structure freedom over control and avoids any sense of boundary. His lyric writing exhibits a "penchant for meandering chromatic and microtonal lines . . . his style constitutes the purest, most unambiguous possible challenge to the authoritarian Philistinism of pre-Glasnost official Soviet culture . . . full, hard-edged avant-gardism that characterized classical music during the century's third quarter."[28] Denisov's lyricism requires the spatiality of foreground and background textures, and establishes a hierarchy of sound function over pitch selection. Precise control of rhythmic ambiguity through ratio-governed notation (i.e. ratios dividing tuplet-grouped notes into 3:1, 5:4, 11:12, etc.) permits avoidance of "collective" tuttis thereby providing freedom of expression. This is particularly poignant in terms of the struggles Denisov faced in the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union.

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27 See APPENDIX B: *Interview with Aurèle Nicolet*, (2000).

28 Andrew Stiller, "Denisov: Chamber works," *Musical America*, (Nov. 1990) 71-2.

CHAPTER 4

ANTI-COLLECTIVISM IN MUSIC

Individual in Collective Ideology

Establishment of a group consciousness, imperative in the communist Soviet society, necessitates that commonality and equality are the backbone of the individual's role in society. Equality is imperative in the collective mind set and the individual must consider himself dispensable to the group. Any individual considering himself unique or indispensable violates his social contract with the collective, and in Stalinist ideology, the antithesis to the socialist contract is anarchy. Stalin writes in "Anarchism or Socialism:"

> The cornerstone of Marxism, however, is the masses, whose emancipation, according to its tenets, is the principal condition for the emancipation of the individual. That is to say, according to the tenets of Marxism, the emancipation of the individual is impossible until the masses are emancipated. Accordingly, its slogan is: "Everything for the masses."[1]

The socialist contract, therefore, requires indoctrination of the society at multiple levels and in various spheres of influence.[2] Education of the youth is the primary means of this

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[1] From *J. V. Stalin,Works*, Vol. 1, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 299.

[2] It is important to consider that people of the former Tsarist agrarian society lent themselves to self-perception only within their former social strata. According to Hingley: "That the Russians were 'born for slavery,' that they actively preferred enslavement to freedom, that they would happily exhibit the bumps on their foreheads raised through excess of zeal in executing the kowtow - such claims are common in Western travelers' tales of the sixteenth century. Three hundred years later a Russia-domiciled Englishwoman, a Mrs. Smith, saw a serf thank his master for a beating, and concluded that such a people would certainly take centuries to appreciate the blessing of freedom. Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Mind*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 194.

conditioning, however, the result manifests itself over time. Widespread social indoctrination required that, in addition to the education of youth and the general populace, all cultural and social venues reflect and promote the socialist contract.

> Working through all conceivable agencies and methods, the All-Union Communist Party is engaged with great energy in systematically building, in the minds of young and old alike, two great myths - one about themselves and their country and the other about the rest of the world and the so-called "camp of capitalism."[3]

Indoctrination of Collective Socialist Realism through Music

As a result of the 1932 Resolution "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations" composers feared reprisal from the Union of Soviet Composers and were encouraged to tailor their works to Andrei Zhdanov's imperative: ". . . for the political education and training of new generations, its obligation to deal with issues of relevance to contemporary life, and its total subservience to the interests of the people and the state."[4] The "realist" goal of equality and functionality of art commands the artist to balance audience acceptance with that of the artistic conception, and journal criticism addresses the success of the work equally with that of the composer's methodology. For example, critic Jurij Bucko critiques the 'formalist' deficiencies in Denisov's *Wails for soprano, piano, and percussion on Russian Texts* in *Sovetskaja muzyka*:

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[3] George S. Counts and Nucia Lodge, *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), xv.
[4] Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 150.

> . . . Instead of considering the listener as an equal, serial composers try to control the listener. Instead of proving their own conception, they secretly believe in their own righteousness. . . Denisov doesn't deserve the right to have this work played in front of an audience yet.[5]

Galvanizing opinion in favor of resolutions or compositions, illustrative of the "realism" doctrine, was an important function of the Composers Union, and written or verbal reversals, by those who were found guilty of "formalist" offenses occurred at meetings and congresses. This method effectively quelled insurrection before the composer began, as in this letter of Aram Khachaturian printed in *Sovetskaya Muzyka*.[6]

> The resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party expresses the will of our people and reflects in full the opinion of the Soviet people about our music.
>
> The decree sets us musicians free. In actuality it casts off certain chains which for many years have shackled us. In spite of my grievous moral state, whose cause you understand, I have a feeling of great gladness and satisfaction.
>
> Life has become easier and freer, and the way is clearly marked, the road is marked, along which Soviet music must move impetuously. I see that way clearly and I have but one wish - to correct as quickly as possible and above all through my creative work all of my mistakes.
>
> How did it happen that I arrived at formalism in my creative work? I have made use of not a few native songs and, in the first instance, of my own native Armenian songs. Also I have made wide use of popular melodies - Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbekian, Turkmenian, and Tatar. I have written a number of songs based on these melodies.

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5 Jurij Bucko and Genrih Litinskij, "Encounters with chamber music," *Sovetskaja muzyka.* 8 trans. Mikhail Safarian (August 1970) 12-14.

6 Counts and Lodge., 178-181.

I have always said that I do not recognize music without melody, that melody is the foundation of musical composition. But in spite of the fact that in my time I have stood on such apparently correct creative positions, I have nevertheless arrived at formalistic mistakes.

I see two causes of these mistakes of mine. The first was enthusiasm for technical perfection. I was often charged with insufficient technical mastery in my compositions. This was reflected in my consciousness. The effort to master technique fully passed imperceptibly into an enthusiasm for technique which manifested itself with particular clarity in *Sinfonia-Poema.*

Thus, fascinated by abstract technique, I arrived at formalism.

The other chief cause and chief mistake was loss of contact with the national soil. All great composers of the past became universal geniuses by being at the same time national geniuses. This is particularly clear in the case of Russian music. Russian composers created the classical school of Russian national music. Being clearly national, Russian music became a world phenomenon, became a possession of all progressive mankind. More than this, Russian music, in the person of Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky and others, began to influence Western music.

I lost contact with the national soil; I lost contact with that earth which apparently I had firmly stood. When critics and students of music suggested that it was time for me in my creative work to advance beyond national boundaries, to repudiate the so-called narrow stylistic trend of my music, I listened to this advice. I was unable in time to repudiate these harmful creative tendencies. Recently I have moved farther and farther away from my native Armenian verses; I wanted to become a cosmopolitan.

Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov in his address at the conference of the Central Committee of the Party said that internationalism in music can develop only on the foundation of the enrichment, the flowering, and the growth of national music and not on the foundation of the Obliteration of national elements.

Creative errors and sympathy for formalistic patterns in our music could not help being reflected in my

work in the Organizational Committee. The committee became a nursery of formalism. And how could it combat formalism when the people who composed it embraced "I full or in part the positions of formalism or were sympathetic toward it. As head of the Organizational Committee I had every opportunity to initiate and lead the struggle against these tendencies; in music; but I did nothing.

I proved to be a bad leader and my methods of work in the Organizational Committee were undemocratic. In recent years I fenced myself off from our public of composers. The members of the committee became lords who plumed themselves on their “creative merits,” and as a result became generals without an army. Criticism and self. criticism in the committee were silenced.

The resolution of the Central Committee said that a stagnant atmosphere was created and that creative discussions were lacking. one of the chief factors blighting the work of the Organizational Committee was the absence of unity among its members. We were Occupied with petty squabbles and the clarification of personal relationships. We forgot that we were supposed to lead the Union of Soviet Composers and that we should carry with us the entire mass of composers. Hypocritically flattering each other, we, members of the Organizational Committee, found ourselves in extremely antagonistic relations.

For the unhappy state of Soviet music, created as a result of the incorrect line which the Organizational Committee pursued under any leadership, I bear full responsibility.

I want to speak here about one more very grave peril. I want to warn those comrades who, like me, hoped that, if their music is not understood today by the people, then it will be understood tomorrow by coming generations. This is a destructive theory. At present in our country the judges of music are millions of persons, the entire Soviet people. What tasks can be higher and more honorable than those of writing music intelligible to our people, of giving gladness to millions by our creative work?

I call on all Soviet composers and, first of all, on

> Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Shebalin, Popov, Miaskovsky, and Muradeli to respond to the severe and just resolution of the Central Committee of the Party with a decisive reconstruction of their views on music and to prove by their creative work the depth and sincerity of this reconstruction.
>
> Our chief task now is for all of us to rally around the decision of the Central Committee, to work ever harder and better, to show by deed that Soviet composers march in the front rank of the all-conquering Soviet culture.

The Composer as Individual

The individual composer, artist, philosopher absorbed in his craft, seldom considers the repercussions of the creative process, and the internal struggle of imagination, cogitation, consolidation, and realization[7] precludes an amending of the process, unless the work results from a commission. In humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy the self-actualized mind (of the artist in this case) rarely considers basic needs which the body politic and government are directly and continuously attentive.[8] To the Marxist from a imposed socio-economic stratum that does not allow self-actualization, however, the "ivory tower" intellectual or artist creates a product irrelevant to the struggle of meeting the basic needs of food, shelter, or

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7 Denisov discusses the internal process of composition, alluding to mathematical formulation and deduction, based upon the work of Jacques Hadamard's *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), wherein Hadamard divides the process into "preparation, incubation, and illumination." Denisov. "The Compositional Process," *Tempo*, (May 1993), 2-5.

8 Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow devised the "hierarchy of needs" schema illustrating the necessary prerequisites of abstract thinking. The "basic needs:" physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and self-esteem must be met before the an individual can consider the "meta-needs:" cognitive, aesthetic, and self-actualization. See *Motivation and Personality*, (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1970).

industrial development for the masses. The Marxist differs from his Western counterpart because the funding that underwrites artistic creativity originates entirely from the proletariat, whereas the Western artist's financial support comes from multiple levels of the socio-economic strata.[9]

> To the revolutionary Marxist, individuals, their thought, and "inner world" in general are merely part of the material world that is to be ordered - new rational thought can only arise out of a new rational order of life itself. But the very act of creating the new world is consequently irrational and purely artistic. The creators of this new world, after all, cannot claim complete rationality for their project, since they themselves were shaped in a reality that was not yet harmonious. All that distinguishes the artist-ruler from the crowd of ordinary mortals is the knowledge that the world is elastic and that therefore everything that the average person seems stable and immutable is in reality relative and subject to change. It is total power over society that shields the creator of the new life from all possible criticism. Since critics occupy only a particular position in society, they do not have the overarching view of the whole that only power can provide. Their criticism, therefore, can only arise from remnants of the old social order in their thought or from one-sided views incapable of grasping the artistic whole of the new world.[10]

The pure artist's agenda includes only the necessary material for conception of his product, regardless of external forces, which he often considers editorial in nature. However, the political-cultural atmosphere of the Soviet Union forced an artist to conform to or disregard the state's cultural ideology, thereby categorizing himself as a

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9 The proletarian ("blue collar") class exists in democratic and socialist/communist societies, however, the Soviet bureaucracy enforces mandated socialist equality by halting individual class advancement through governmental control of labor, product, and profit.

10 Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. by Charles Rougle, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4.

patriotic or dissident artist.

> Artists. . . who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s tried to distinguish themselves as much as possible from the ideology of socialist realism, from official art. Even today they insist they were not dissident artists, which implies political dissent. Rather, they insist that they wanted to use art for purposes more private than conforming to the dictates of the authorities. But the very desire to distance themselves from socialist realism and all that it represented was clearly a political act, although not directly an adversarial one.[11]

The Anti-Collective Individual and Artist

The anti-collective philosophy is an assertion of individuality over the collective as a reaction to totalitarian control.[12] The origin of the term is clearly evident in Stalin's words: "Collective work, collective leadership, unity in the Party, unity in the organs of the Central Committee, with the minority submitting to the majority."[13] Anti-collectivism, because of it's prefix, exists as a reactionary philosophy in the socialist society.

The dissident and semi-conformist artist must choose between physical self-preservation (physiological and professional) and personal artistic integrity. As illustrated, composers including Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Muradeli

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11 Renee Baigell and Matthew Baigell, *Soviet Dissident Artists: Interviews After Perestroika*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 11.

12 Anti-collectivism can be considered a Western and Eastern-European colloquial term describing individuality.

13 From the address to The Fourteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.) on December 18-31, 1925. *Joseph Stalin: Works* 7, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 402-3.

presented formal apologies to both the Composers Union and society in general that were appreciative of the "just criticism" leveled at them and eager to satisfy the "realist" agenda. Some composers, however, maintained personal artistic goals and were labeled as dissidents. The conscious decision to retain individual solidarity positions Edison Denisov as a dissident artist. Both compositions and writings reflect an intentional "anti-collective"[14] approach.

14 See Appendices: *Interviews with Ekaterina Denisov* and *Aurèle Nicolet*.

CHAPTER 5
ANTI-COLLECTIVIST CHARACTERISTICS IN DENISOV'S MUSIC

Characteristics of Denisov's Music

The musical style, structure, and language in Edison Denisov's works demonstrate an inherent anti-collectivism, the compositional ingredients, outlined by Kholopov and Tsenova, of "sublime lyricism, viscous stream of several voices, shooting or pricking staccatos, pointillistic splashes, and sporadic static tone clusters,"[1] share an underlying polyphony, characterized by avoidance of melodic and rhythmic unity. Denisov's "viscous streams" exhibit extreme polyphony where simultaneous voices share no common rhythmic ratio (subdivision), adding a dimension to the texture. This characteristic trait appears in the opening movement of the *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes* (1989) where polyrhythmic melodies are spun out without an ensemble tutti for 75 measures. This characteristic appears in the earlier *Peniture* (1970), with multiple individual string parts entering individually. The absence of homophonic rhythm and a common beat division in this dodecaphonic opening characterize the performers as individuals playing coincidentally, rather than as a coherent ensemble. Rhythmic coincidence of individuals rather than the governance of individuals by uniform meter is a representative trait of anti-collectivist musical style. Performers are free to interpret and

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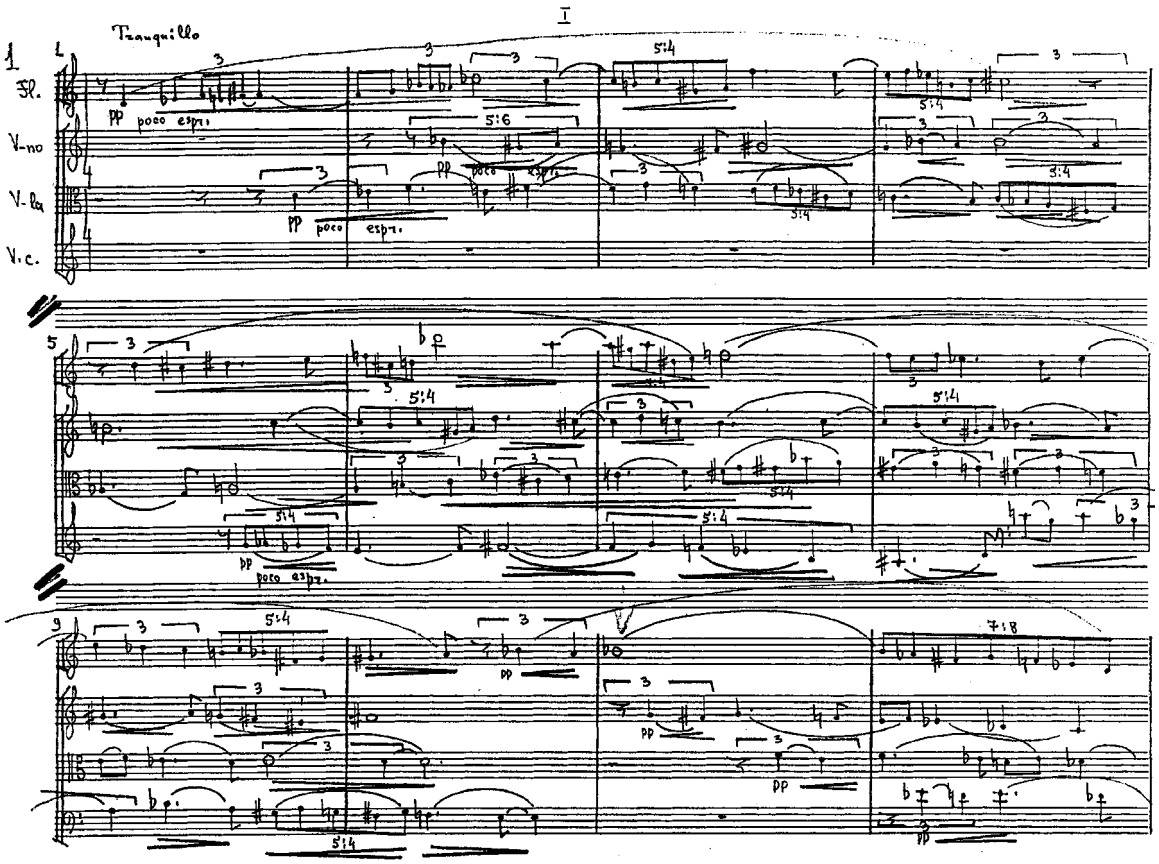
1 Kholopov and Tsenova, 51.

interact without specific metric subdivision within the score, establishing freedom which yields cooperatively (rather than collectively)[2] to the homophonic texture in measure 76. (see Example 3)

Example 3. *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes,* I. *Tranquillo.*

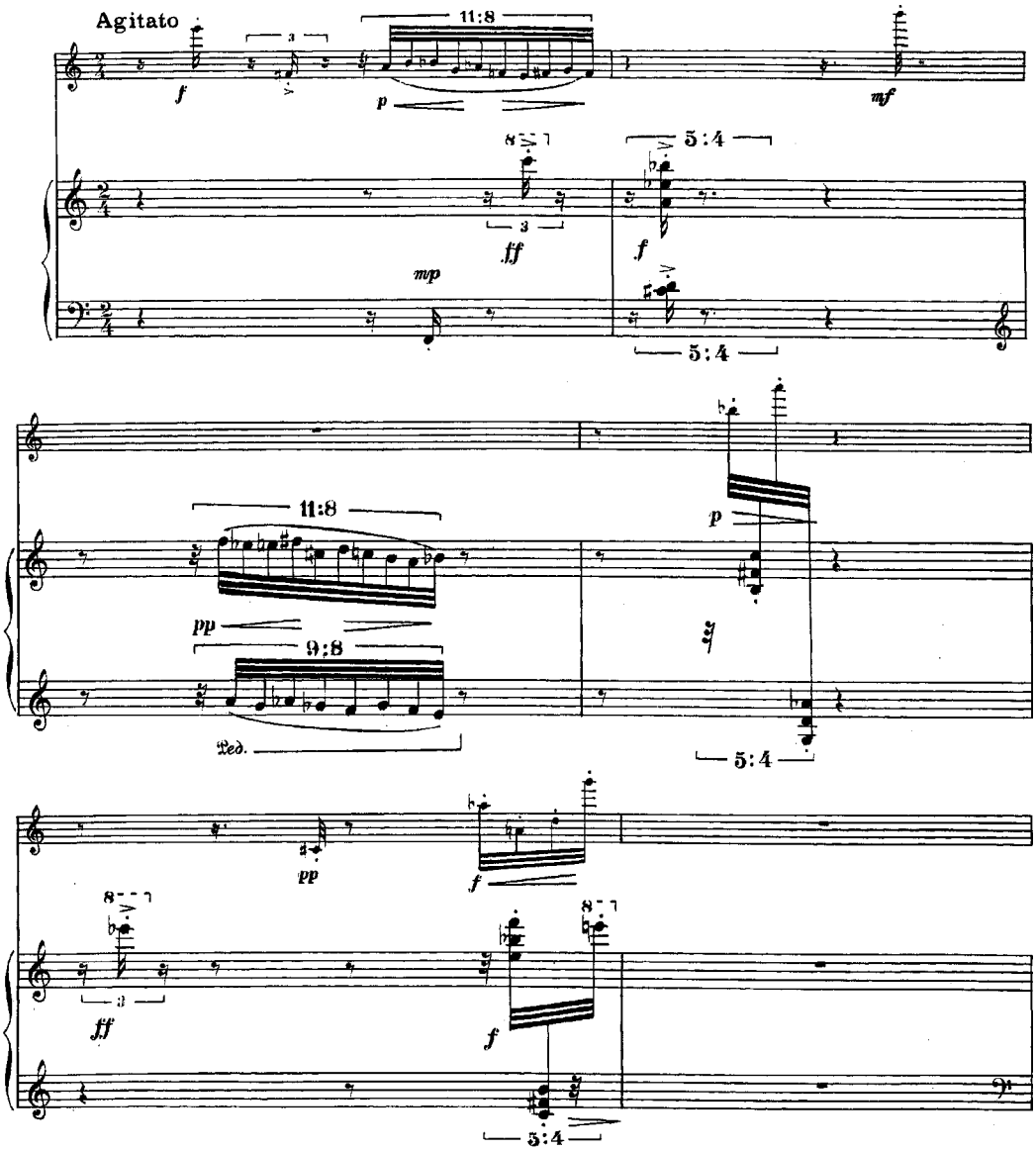


To depict antagonism between individual voices, labeled 'Shooting' or 'pricking' dots by Kholopov and Tsenova, Denisov precisely notates sharply-accented staccato pitches, often followed by pointillistic rhythms. This state of maximum individuality is

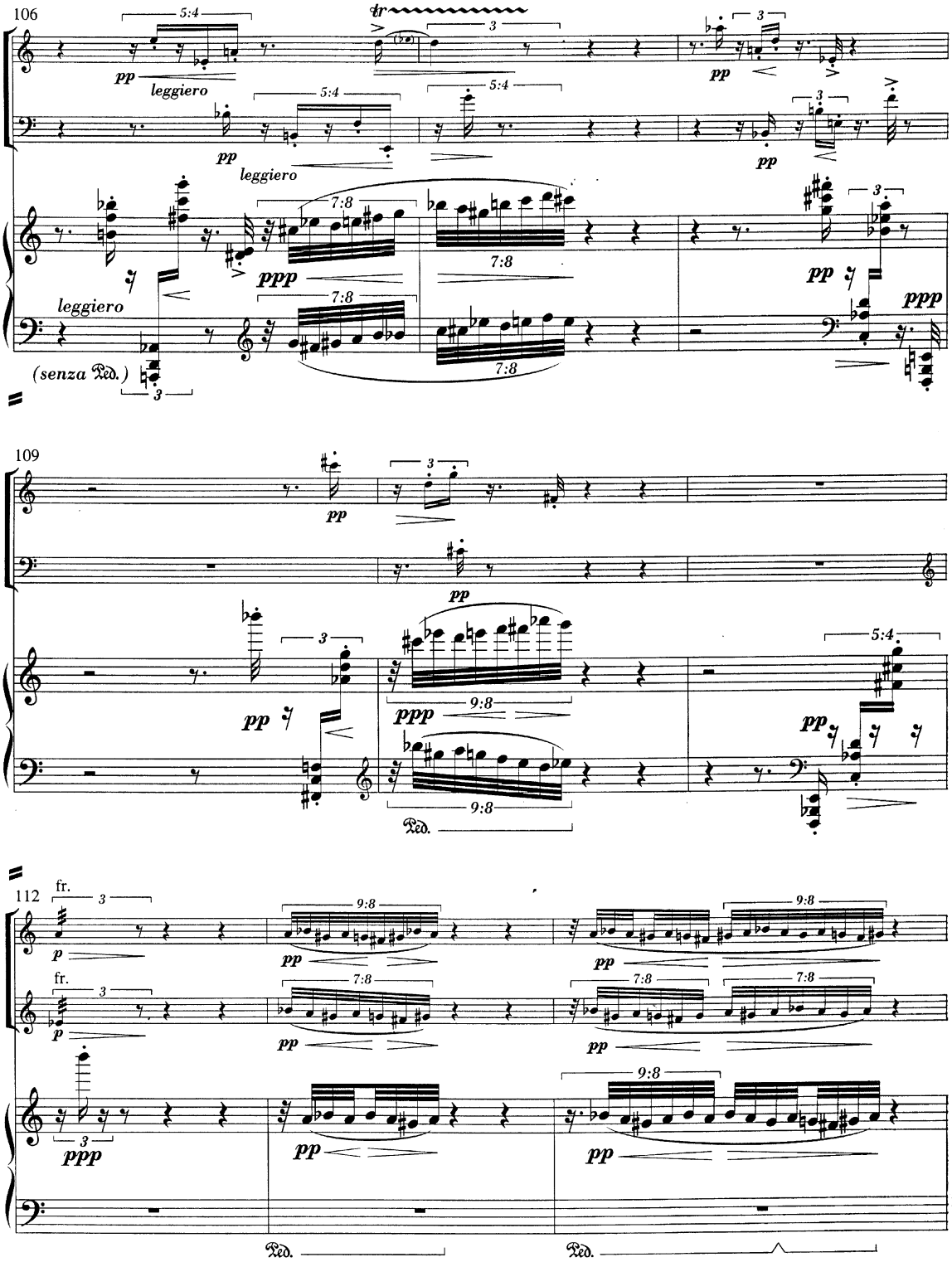
[2] Both terms can be defined similarly: "working together toward a common good," however, "collective" implies action by an outside "collector" or construct.

punctuated by moments of silence after which the agitated voices compete again. Viscous streams are often interspersed between the staccatos acting as contrast to the argumentative texture. The finales of the *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano* of 1977 (Example 4) and the *Trio pour flûte, basson et piano* of 1995 (Example 5) feature this dramatic interplay.

Example 4. *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*, IV. *Agitato.*

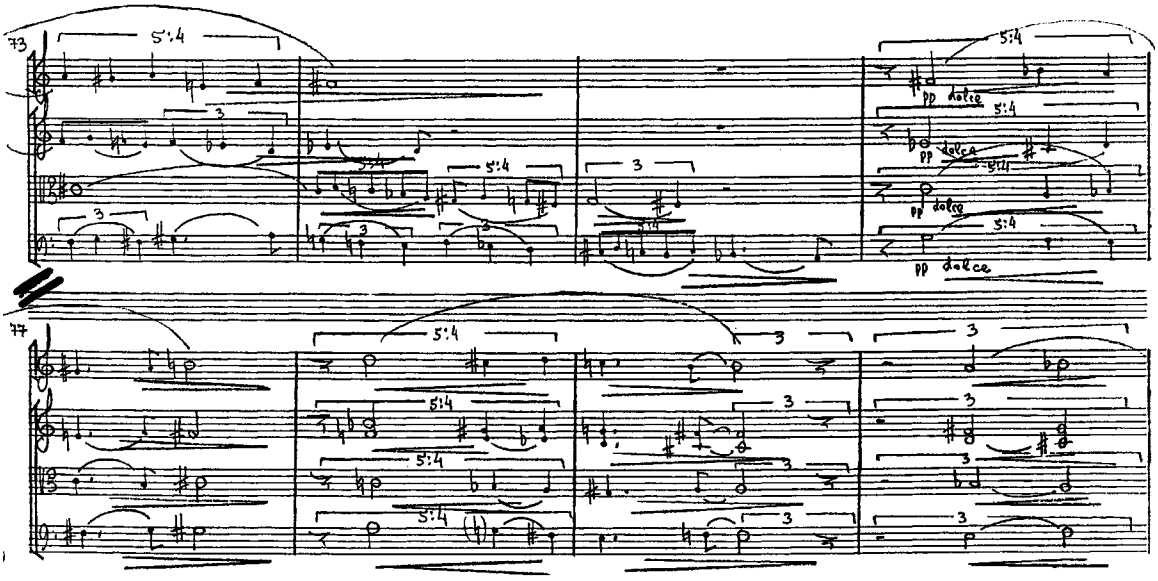


Example 5. *Trio pour flûte, basson et piano,* II. *Allegro moderato.*



Denisov creates homophonic polytonal textures using complimentary sets, supersets, or subsets of dodecaphonic and nondodecaphonic sets.[3] This freedom of set usage maintains the integrity of the individual voices during chorale and *Klangfarbenmelodie* passages. The chorale featured in the opening movement to the *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes* (Example 6) illustrates this harmonic feature.

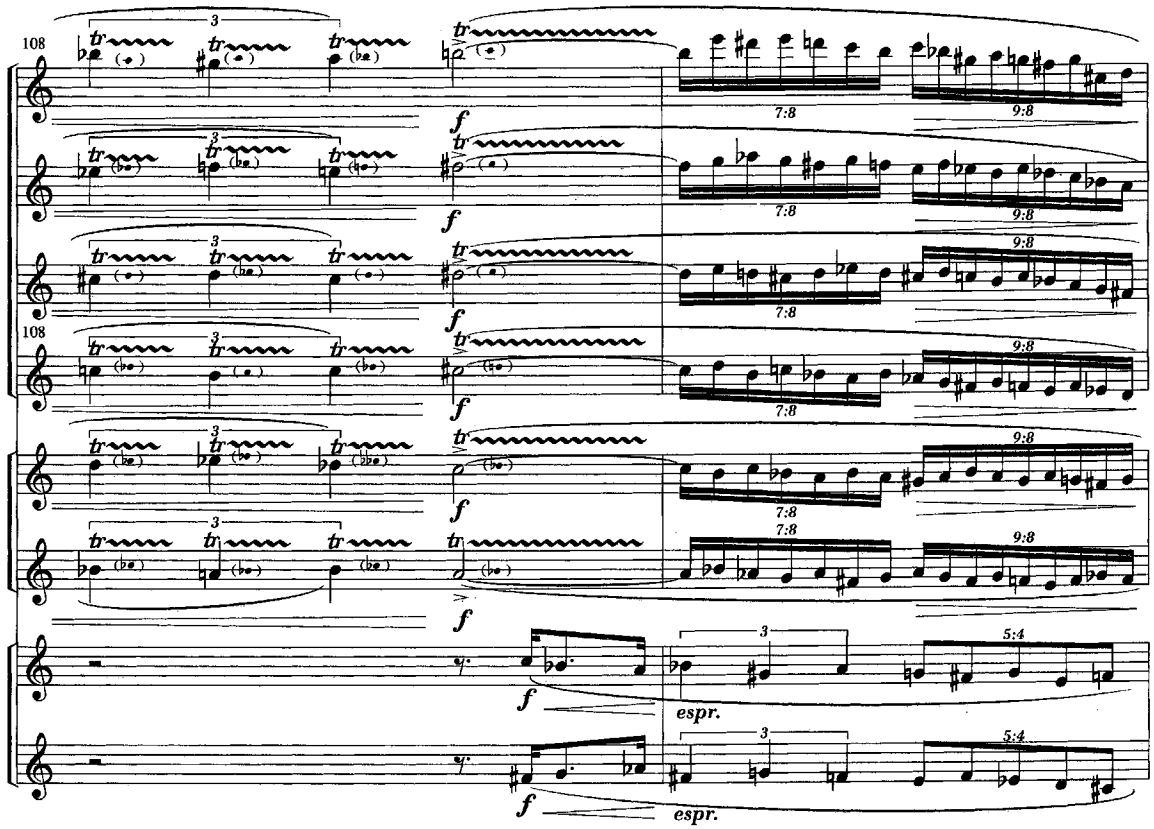
Example 6. *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes*, I. *Tranquillo*.



Denisov uses this texture in the *Variations sur un Thème de Mozart* of 1990 (Example 7) with each voice providing a separate melodic variation within heterophonic and homophonic textures.

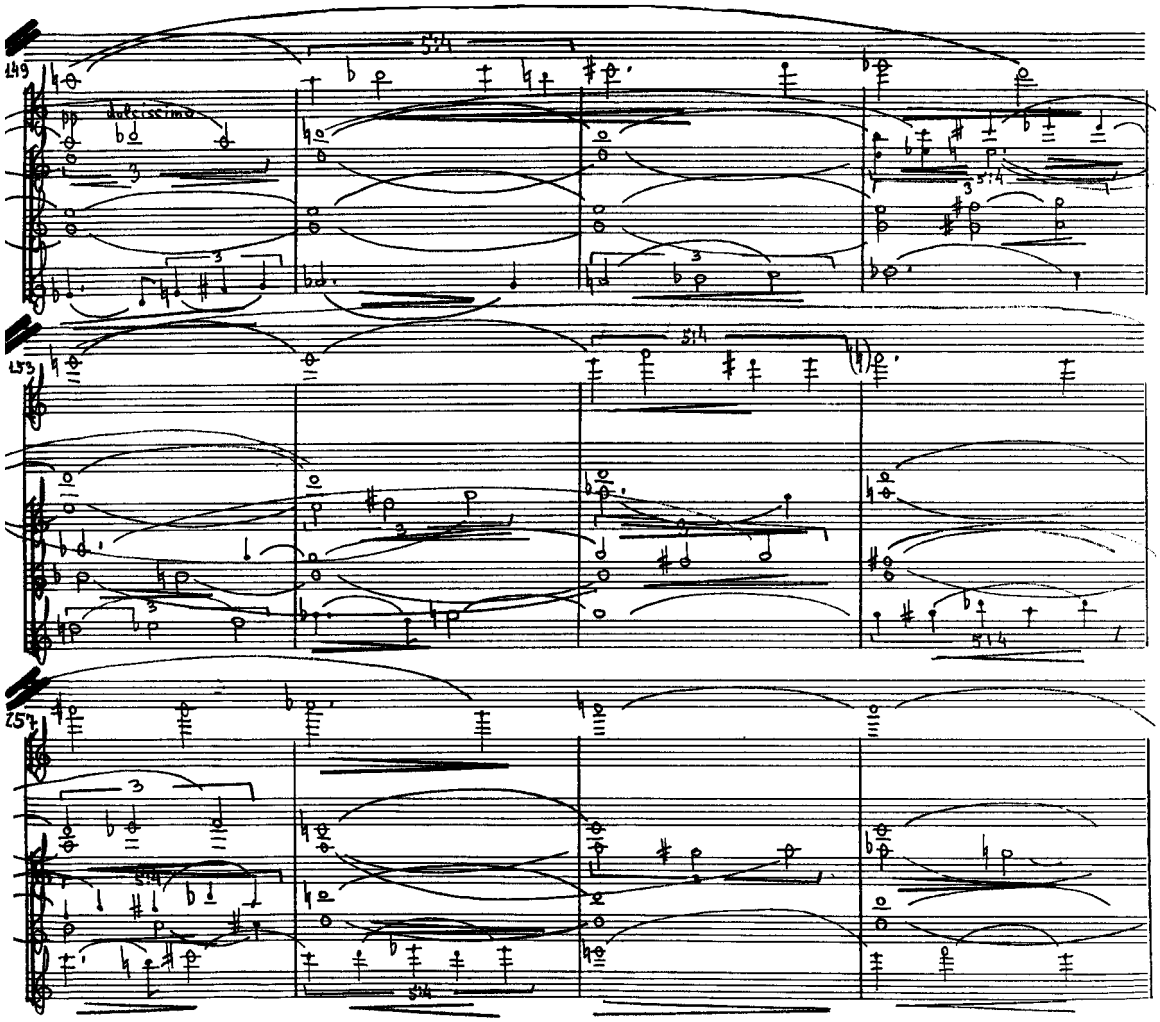
[3] Denisov uses free dodecaphonic organization similar to Russian serialist composer Nicolai Roslavetz (1881-1944). Roslavetz uses different sets within a work and freely transposes using pivotal note connections between sets. See George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality*, 6th ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 43-44.

Example 7. *Variations sur un Thème de Mozart*, measures 108-9.



Denisov's lyric writing is characterized by melodies performed in an instrument's upper register at soft dynamic levels. Often the melodies are to be performed as harmonics or with muted instruments, as in the first movement of the *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes* (Example 8). Again, the individuality of the melodic line is paramount as the melodies in both polyphonic and homophonic texture remain rhythmically and harmonically independent.

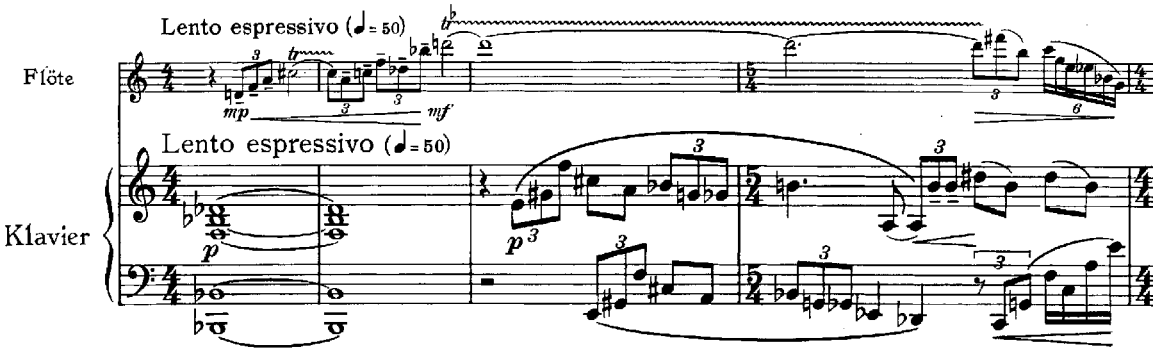
Example 8, *Quatuor pour flûte et cordes*. I. *Tranquillo,* m. 149-160.



Origins of Denisov's Anti-Collectivist Style
The *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1960)

The *Sonata for Flute and Piano,* written in 1960, displays anti-collectivist characteristics of rhythmic and melodic independence in a polytonal setting. Denisov's staccato pointillism and "viscous streams" gestures are present in embryonic form. A bitonal introduction (B-flat minor/D-minor) leads to an eleven-note tone row in the right hand of the piano, followed by the first presentation of a multi-rhythmic contrapuntal 'viscous stream' on beats 4 and 5 of measure four.

Example 9. *Sonate for flute and piano,* measures 1-4.



The contrapuntal texture returns to the opening heterophonic chordal accompaniment (this time in a D-flat/G-flat bitonality) to the flute's melodic arpeggiation (in D minor). The piano maintains harmonic and rhythmic support until measure 12 where a two-voice canon leads to another primordial 'viscous stream' in measure 14. From measure 15 to 25, the heterophonic texture contains a precursor to the lyric figures that Denisov writes

in his mature works. This flute melody at a mezzo piano and pianissimo dynamic deviates rhythmically from the chordal accompaniment using metric instead of ratio subdivision.

Structurally, the three-movement *Sonate* is through-composed with the second movement concluding with a recapitulation of the first movement. Denisov's bitonal problem (B-flat minor tonality versus the D major tonality) is reconciled in favor of B-flat minor. The flute's C-sharp to D trill in the opening is rationalized enharmonic to D-flat in measures 161-164. Statements of C-sharp occur in measures 27-28, 37-38, 58-62, and 154-156 dividing the movements into an overall sonata-allegro form with the development occurring at the second movement (measure 63) and the recapitulation in measure 141. Denisov's choice of the title *Sonata* serves a twofold purpose: as a descriptor of the slow-fast-slow movement scheme and designation of the overall form. In this manner, Denisov stresses formal organization of the overall work rather than repose of tonality within the movement(s). Despite the simple bitonality and rhythmic variance, in contrast to later mature works, the overall characteristics of independence of instruments, formal organization, and tonal language[4] classify the work as a "formalist" composition.

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4 The Soviet listener at this time was accustomed to more tonal works including: Kabalevsky's *Spring, Symphonic Poem for Orchestra,* Shostakovich's *String Quartets*, Nos. 7 and 8, or Taktakishvili's opera *Mindiya.*

Prélude et Air (1961), "A Soviet Artist's Reply. . . ?"

This work in Denisov's catalog is a paradox when viewed in relation to the *Sonate pour flûte et piano* of the previous year and to his later works. Furthermore, the lack of progressive material and stylistic gestures found in the *Sonate* is replaced by diatonic melodies, traditional notation and rhythm, homophonic and heterophonic textures in a polytonal and polymodal neo-classical work. Is the work easily-digestible for those in power in the Composers Union or simply a "character piece" written for a specific occasion such as an examination or convocation?

Despite Denisov's minimal use of progressive tonal language and lack of rhythmic diversity, his characteristic independence of melodic voices remains in the *Prélude.* The flute and right hand voice in the keyboard, each written in different modes, cadence to the tonic with the left hand of the piano in measures 3, 12, 14, 24, and 27. Cadences to the submediant are outlined by the melodic contour of the bass line, occurring in measures 5, 9, 16, which together with the cadences to the tonic establish the tonality in C major. The movement is constructed of four phrases: m. 1-12, 12-18, 18-22, 22-23, and a coda: measures 24-27. This structure yields phrase lengths of 12, 7, 5, 2, and 4 measures, respectively.[5] Excluding the coda, the phrases exhibit an additive arithmetic series similar

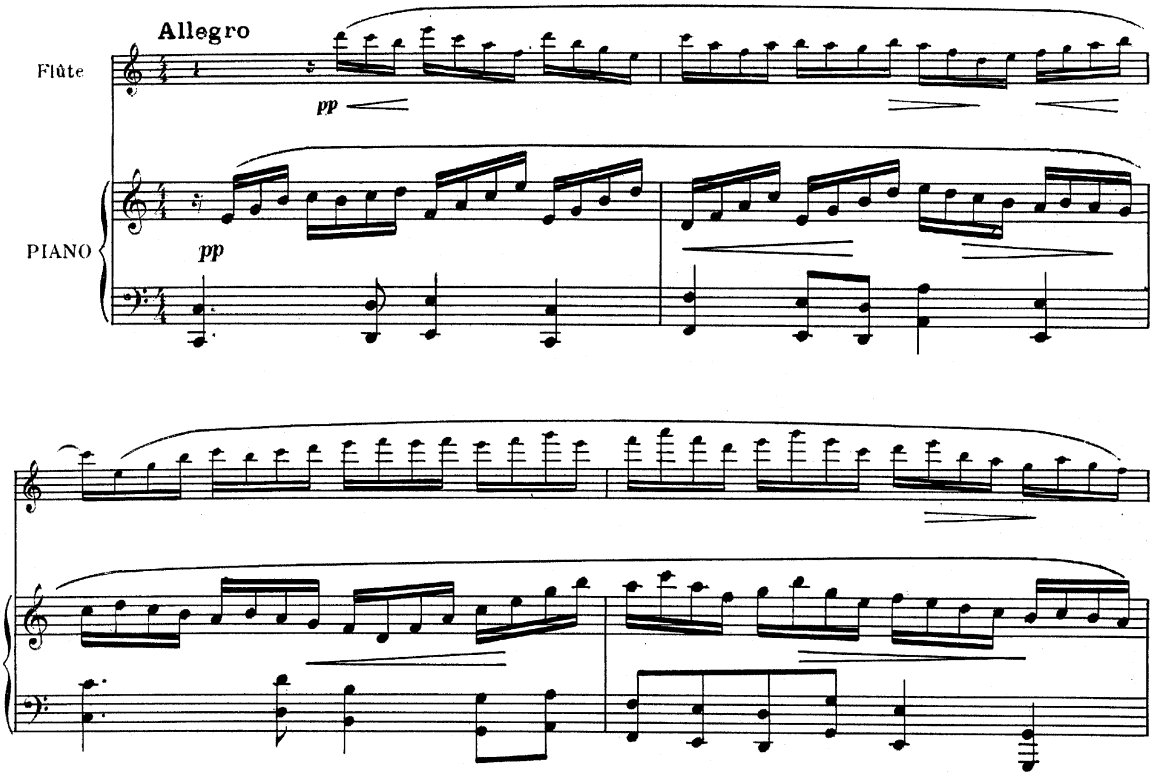
[5] Taking in account the integer value (12, 18, 22) of the measures where the tonic appears inclusive of the phrase itself. Measure 24 is not grouped in the phrase beginning in measure 22 because there is no bass movement by perfect fourth, or minor second - the bass moves by minor third (E-flat to C).

to that of Fibonacci.[6] Considering Denisov's background in mathematics, this proportional phrase structure tightly organizes and dictates the brevity of the movement.

The polymodality and polytonality between the voices of the *Prélude* occur in various combinations at a distance of a major or minor second. In the opening, the C major tonality is established by both voices of the piano, and the flute enters at the supertonic level (D) and progresses through the mediant, supertonic, tonic, leading, and submediant while the right hand moves from the subdominant, mediant, supertonic, to the mediant, in contrary motion (Example 10).

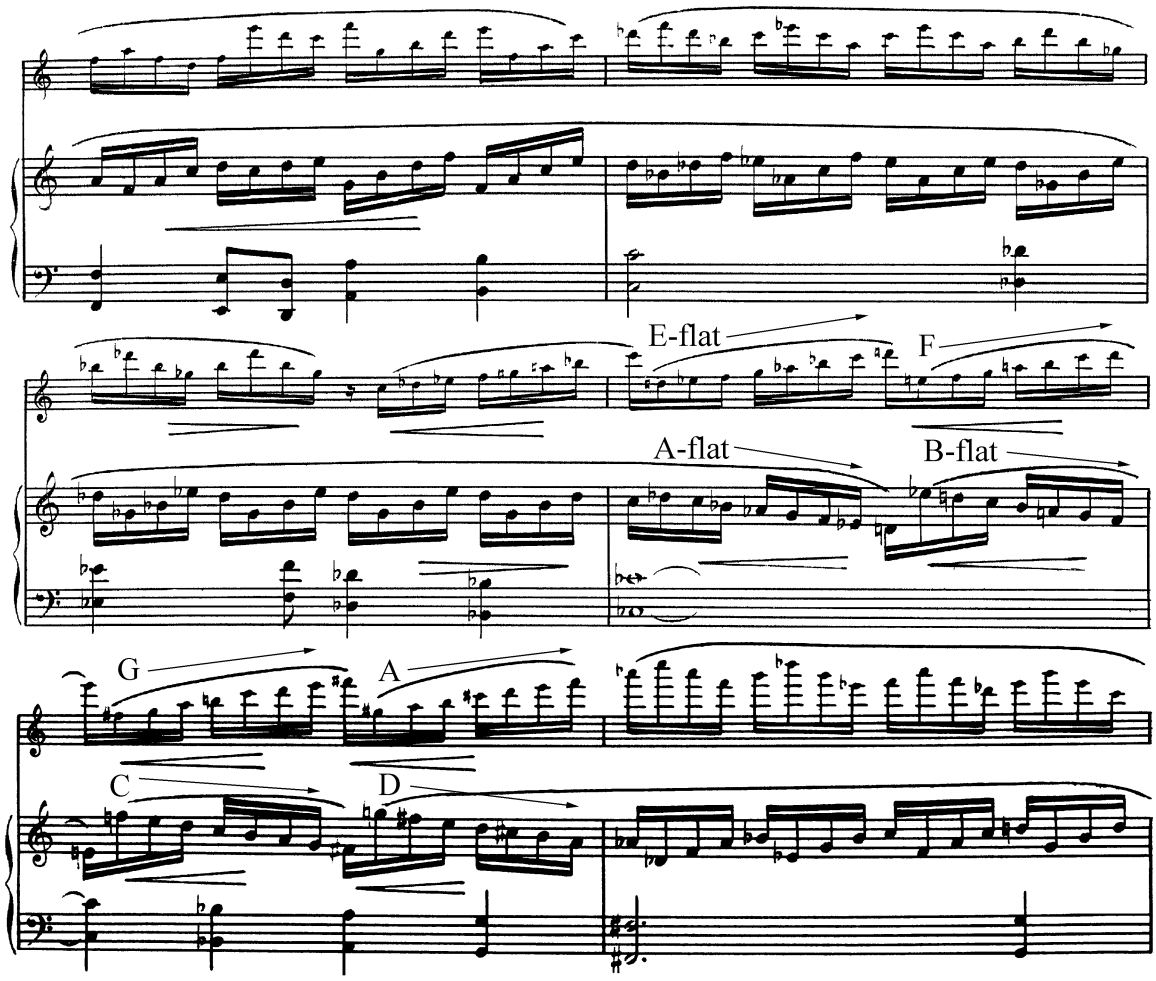
6 Italian mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci (c. 1171-1230) discovered a numeric summation series closely approximating that of the golden mean. The series generates each successive number by adding the previous two: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, etc.

Example 10. *Prélude* et Air. I. *Allegro,* measures 1-4.



After this parallel bitonal interplay occurs in measures 1-2, a bimodal exchange in contrary motion (Flute: C, E; Piano: C, A, F) starts in measure 3 leading to parallel motion in measure 4. (Flute: F-A-F-D, E-G-E-C; Piano: A-C-A-F, G-B-G-E). This bimodality remains intact until the flute and right hand of the piano modulate to D-flat in measure 18 while the left hand continues in C major. While the left hand of the piano struggles to reach the D-flat tonality, the upper voices reach common tones on beats one and three of measures 21 and 22, after which they precede to the next common tone via different scales (measure 21: E-flat/A-flat, F/B-flat, G/C, and A/D) (see Example 11).

Example 11. *Prélude et Air*, measures 17-22.

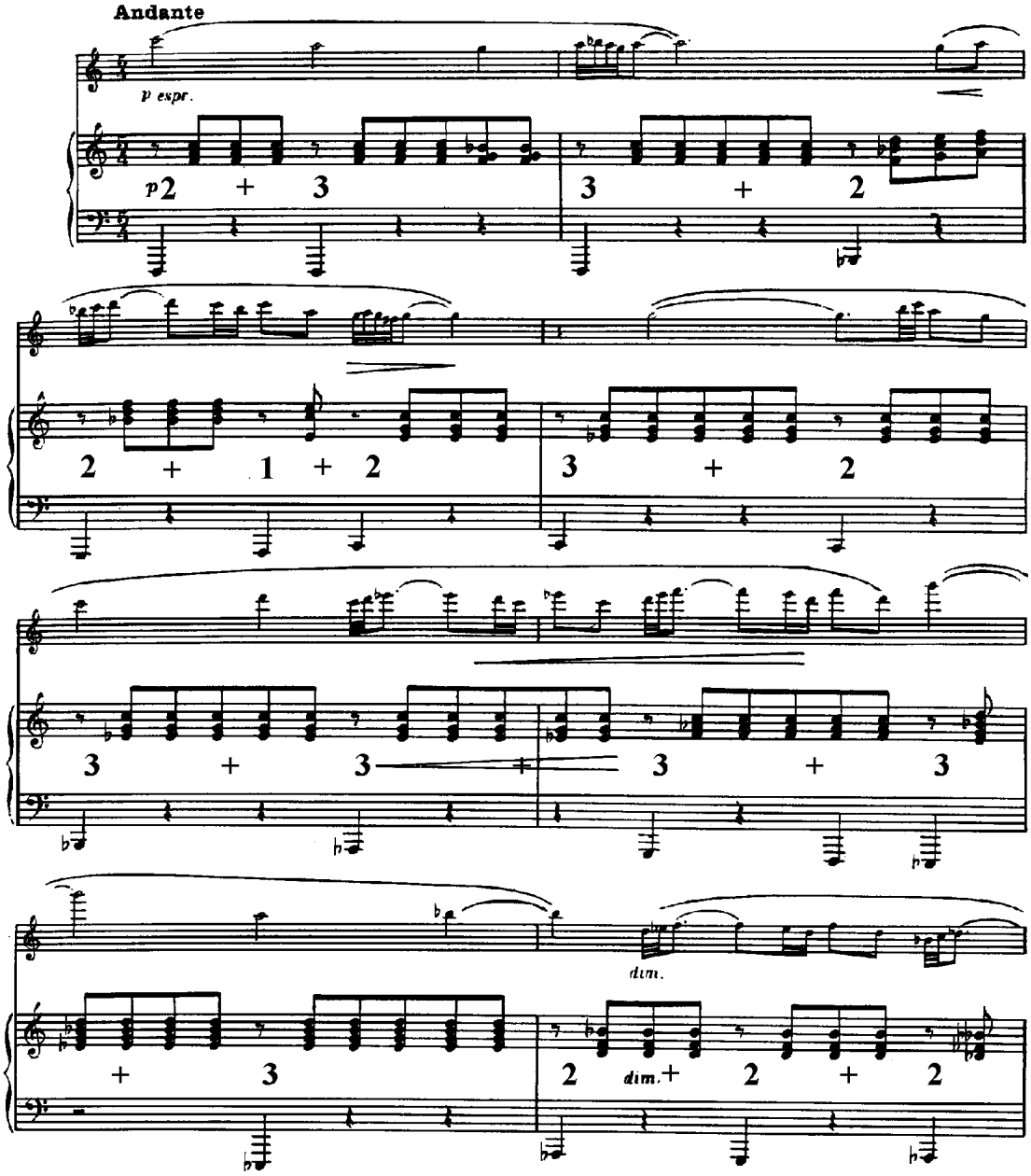


These polytonal melodies cadence to C major in measure 23 followed by a four-measure coda. Because Denisov uses melodies in related keys, the listener does not immediately perceive the polymodal and polytonal complexity.

The *Air*, primarily song-like heterophony is written in a ternary A B A´ form, with the A´ a rhythmic and textural variation. The simple folk-like melody stated by the flute in asymmetric 5/4 meter allows for pulse shift shown by the list of rhythmic groupings in the piano as follows: m. 1: 2+3; m. 2: 3+2; m. 3: 2+1+2; m. 4: 3+2; mm. 5-7:

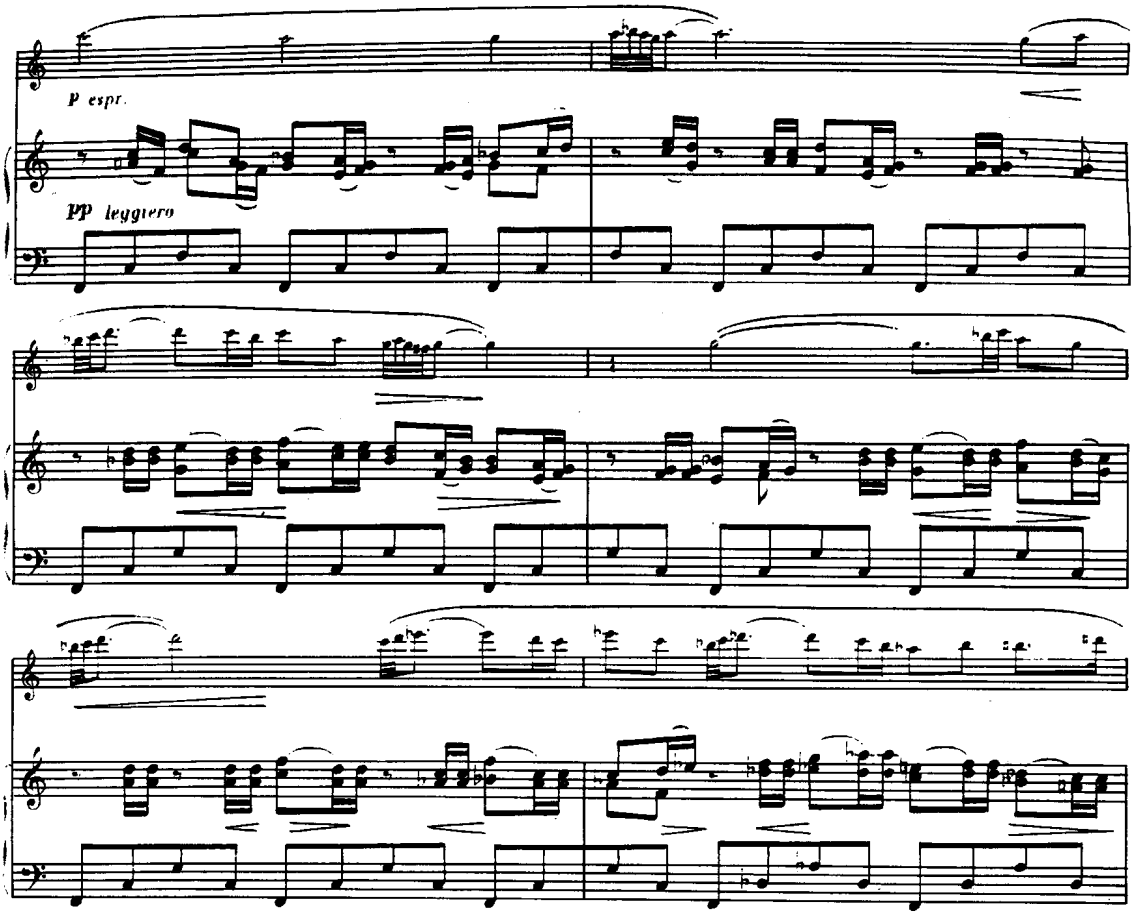
3+3+3+3+3, etc., (Example 12). This amorphous pulse compliments the melody, establishing interdependency between the flute and the piano. In measure 10 the addition of the parallel melody in the piano, at a distance of a third from the flute material, restates the theme an octave lower providing a sense of harmonic stability before the B section.

Example 12. *Prélude et Air*, II. *Air*, measures 1-8.



The B section begins in the subdominant B-flat major to the opening F major. The theme begins in a retrograde diminution of the A theme, and Denisov uses the theme over a simple accompaniment, which remains in a 3+2 pulse until measure 23. The B theme in G minor, found in the piano in m. 19, is accompanied by a variation of the same theme in the flute in B-flat minor. This bitonal interplay remains until the recapitulation of the A theme in measure 27, where the accompanimental pulse changes to a duple pulse, establishing complete independence of bitonal voices until the movement's conclusion (Example 13).

Example 13. *Prélude et Air*. II. *Air*, measures 27-32.



In this neo-Romantic work bimodality and bitonality create independence of voices. The traditional rhythmic organization, in contrast to multiple ratio divisions of the beat found in his mature works, conceals a lack of "collective" tonal harmony which was sanctioned by socialist "realism." At first hearing, the innocuous style and construction of the work allow acceptance by the Soviet "realist" and dismissal by the sophisticated audience. The use of bitonality in consonant thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths disguises the independence of the voices. These individual voices, rather than submit to the mandate of tonality and meter, are composed as an "anti-collective" musical statement rather than as a socialist tonal mandate.

CHAPTER 6
ANTI-COLLECTIVIST STYLE IN *QUATRE PIÈCES POUR FLÛTE ET PIANO*

Konzert für Flöte und Kammerorchester (1975)

Denisov wrote the *Quatre Pieces* in 1977 for Swiss flutist Aurèle Nicolet, who had premiered the *Concerto for Flute and Chamber Orchestra* the preceding year. Nicolet and Denisov's association first began in 1971 when Nicolet commissioned the *Solo pour flûte seule* to be published in *Pro Musica Nova: Studies for Playing Avant-Garde Music*.[1] About Denisov's *Concerto,* Nicolet states:

> The work represents the best period of Denisov's composition. The instrumentation is very interesting: solo flute, two clarinets, bass clarinet, celeste, harp, two percussionists, six violins, five violas, four violoncellos, and three contrabasses - all individual parts. It is a resistance work against the political atmosphere in Russia. In the entire work, there is never a tutti. No one plays together with another on the same part. You see that all the violins have a separate part each, never a unison. Much of the figuration is played on reaction, especially when divisions of the beat are in odd numbers - five, seven, etc.. There is often a dialogue between the flute and percussion. This was very modern at this time - and these parts are never together, as well. If the parts are rhythmically together, the pitches belong to different configurations and scales. . . C major, E-flat minor, etc.. You see this is *anticollectivistche* . . . anti-collective.[2] (see Example 14, with conductor's cues)

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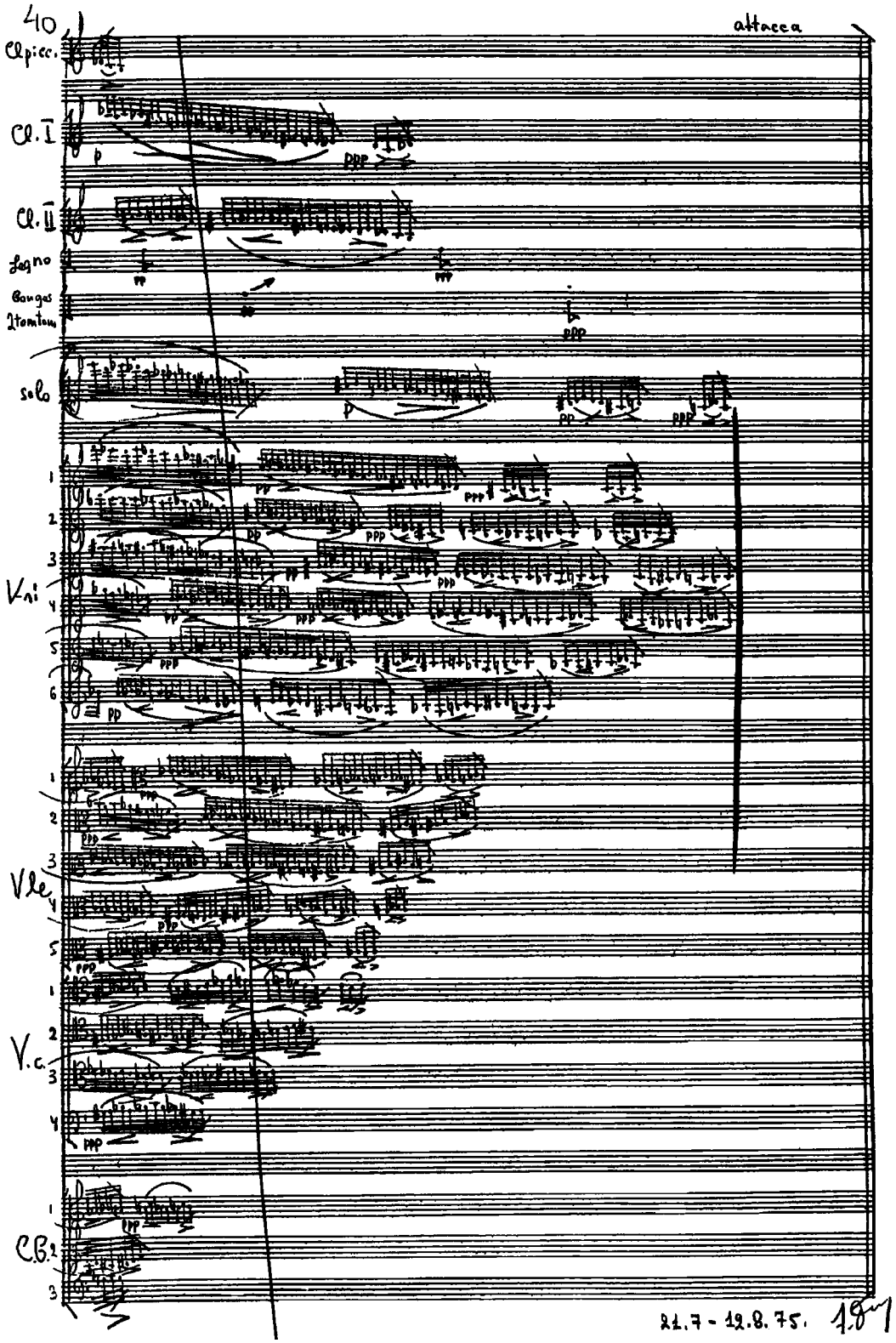
1 Aurèle Nicolet, ed. *Pro Musica Nova: Studien zum Spielen Neuer Musik*, (Köln: Musikverlag Hans Gerig; New York: MCA Music, 1974), 32.

2 See APPENDIX: *Interview with Aurèle Nicolet*, Basel, Switzerland, 2000.

Example 14. *Konzert für Flöte und Kammerorchester,* p. 40.



The compositional language used in the *Concerto* includes many of the anti-collective characteristics discussed in the previous chapter, including florid and viscous polyphony, shooting or pricking staccatos, pointillistic splashes, and sporadic 'static' tone clusters. Extended performance techniques, required of the soloist and ripieno, include quarter and three-quarter tone pitch bends, indeterminate glissandos, measured pizzicatos, and *sul ponticelli.* The second movement, *Allegro agitato*, is written without meter and employs multiple layers of polyphony.[3] Three of the four movements are slow (I and IV marked *Adagio,* and III marked *Andante*) giving the *Concerto* an overall improvisatory character. The individual nature of the solo and of each member of the ripieno, shown in the example score, reflects an anti-collectivist perspective.

Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano (1977)

Denisov composed the *Quatre Pièces* at Nicolet's request for a piece for flute and piano reflecting "the musical language of the concerto," and the premiere was given by Nicolet and pianist, Jürg Wyttenbach in Paris on April 21, 1978. Denisov composed the *Quatre Pièces* while he was preparing an analysis of Webern's *Variations for Piano*, Op. 27, to be included in *Modern Music and Some Problems Arising in the Evolution of Compositional Techniques*.[4] About the *Quatre Pièces*, Denisov writes:

> The piece is like a mini-projection for greater work, perhaps a symphony or concerto in four movements. The first

[3] The manuscript score, used for the premiere, contains copious cue indications, facilitating the conductor's control of this movement.

[4] (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompozitor, 1986).

> movement is an sonata allegro, not formally, rather in the spirit of the movement - character. The second movement is a scherzo, because it's always unexpected . . . the interplay between the rhythms and silences. The third movement is quasi-classical or neo-classical. It is very calm and a sort of chorale. The arrangement is like a symphony: allegro, scherzo, largo, etc. The last movement is written similar to the first movement and has the character of a coda.[5]

Considering the overall traditional form discussed by Denisov, it is necessary to illustrate the language and gestures characteristic of anti-collectivism. This investigation must consider the stages of imagination, cogitation, and consolidation that comprise Denisov's creative process[6] to illustrate the anti-collective philosophy underlying his compositional technique and methodology. It is important to consider the Soviet artist's thought process as a filter, taking into account the viability and consequences of the artistic product. For a Soviet composer working in the latter half of the 20th century, the amount of self-censorship is particularly important, for example, when Denisov assessed a given work's "formalist traits," the decision to acquiesce to a "realist" collective agenda or to maintain the work independent of that agenda had to be made. Denisov's support of his "formalist" works illustrates independence from the Soviet collective; hence; anti-collectivism.

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[5] Printed in Denisov's personal memoirs. Refer to APPENDIX C: Ekaterina Denisov Interview.

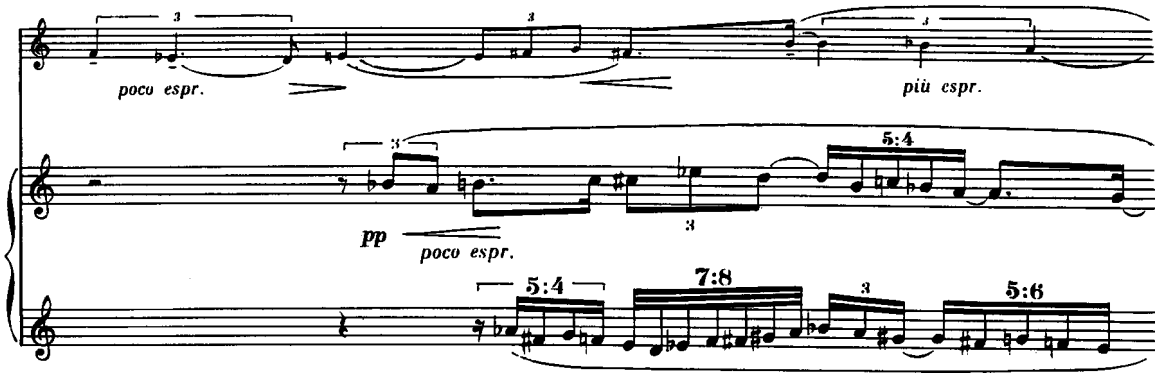
[6] Refer to Denisov's discussion on the internal process of composition in Chapter 4. "The Compositional Process," *Tempo* (May 1993), 2-5.

Notation and Performance Techniques

The *Quatre Pièces* contain both traditional and progressive notation, and the majority of indicated pitches are definite, with three exceptions occurring in the first, third, and fourth movements. A three-quarter tone pitch bend is indicated in the first movement, and eight indeterminate glissandi occur within the third movement and finale. The third movement, *Molto tranquillo*, includes harmonics, multiphonics, and flutter tonguing, incorporated into the finale together with multiphonics and a glissando.

Rhythmically, the first movement, *Lento*, is distinguished by ametric notation without meter or bar lines, however, the rhythms in this movement and movements II and IV, are notated precisely in a combination of traditional and ratio-governed groups (e.g. 5:4, 7:8, 7:4, etc.). The variety and amount of cross-rhythms indicate the inherent individuality of each voice, and the left and right hand of the piano function, equally with the flute (Example 15).

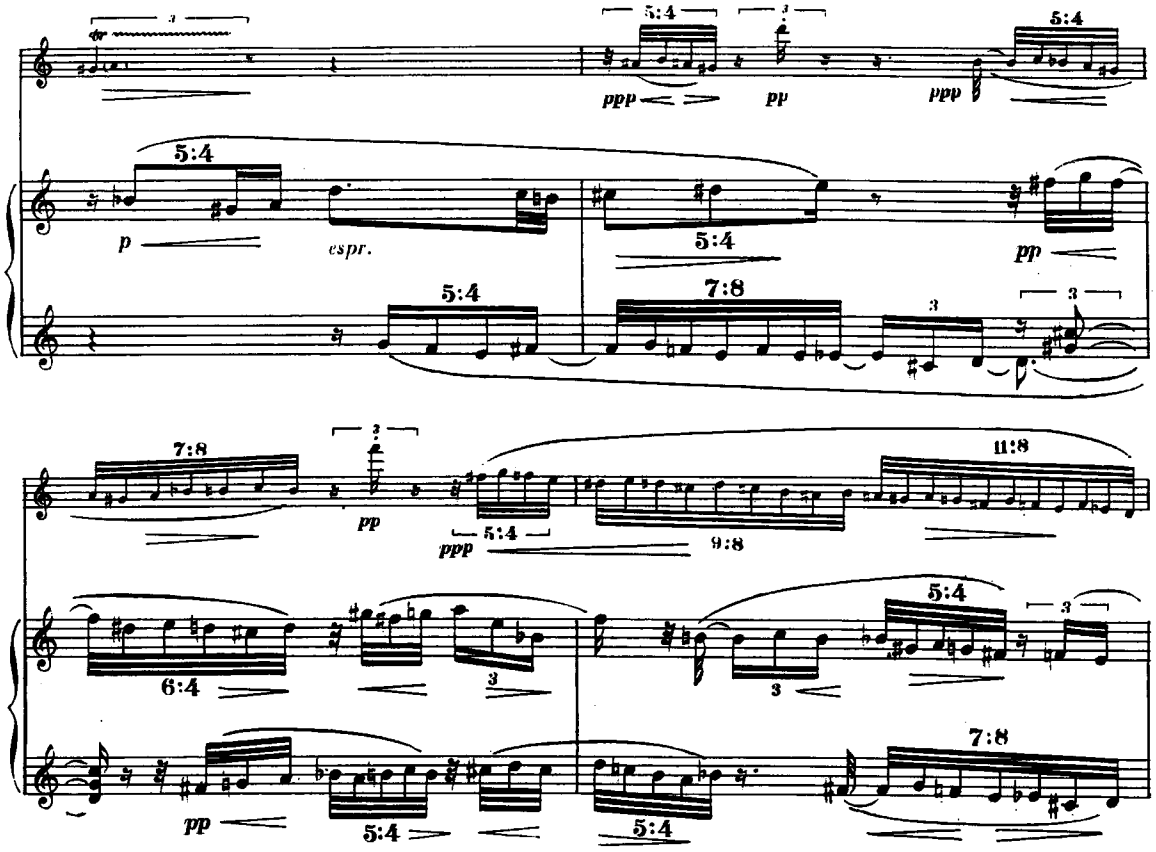
Example 15. Cross rhythms in *Quatre Pièces*, I. *Lento*, p. 4 system 2.



To reiterate, the viscous stream of independent voices, characteristic of Denisov's mature works, can be considered contributions to a musical dialogue constrained only by the spatial organization of time. Time is therefore a medium for events (conversations) to occur within, rather than the governor of subservient actions (metric dictated occurrence). The essence of Denisov's compositional language is the supremacy of the individual over that of the collective.

The second movement, *Allegretto*, differs in mood and style from the others because of unexpected brief silences within the musical dialogue. Denisov's description of the movement as a "quasi scherzo" reflects the effect of the music on both the listener and performer. Considering the precision with which the conversation is notated, the effect upon the listener is that of commotion, and on the performers of complexity (refer to Example 16).

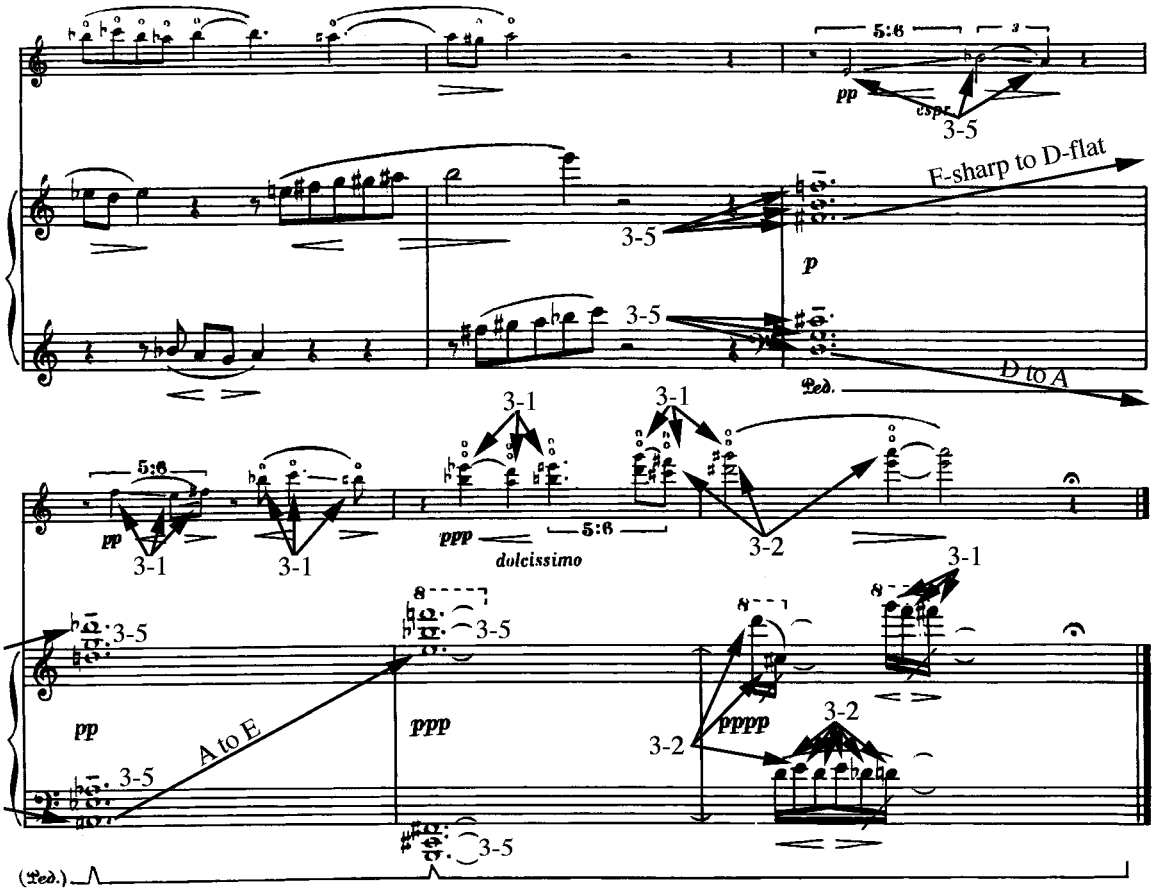
Example 16. Rhythmic complexity in *Quatre Pièces,* II. *Allegretto,* m. 13-16.



With movements I, II, and IV expressing individuality of voice in a combination of metric and ratio-governed rhythms, why the reversion to simple meter in the third movement, *Molto tranquillo*? Stepwise movement of voices within a duple compound meter (or perhaps more correctly: imperfect time/major prolation) lends credence to the theory that the movement recalls the style of sacred polyphony. Interwoven lines, the supremacy of individual voices, the penitent melodic movement of intervals no larger than a perfect fourth, and no dynamic level above piano, suggest liturgical music. An interesting facet of this conservative movement is the indication of harmonics and

multiphonics for the flute in the final four measures of the movement. Polytonal chords in the piano serve as plagal cadences, contrasted with the flute's "wailing" gestures which result from the indefinite glissando (pitch slide) written in the final four measures (Example 17).

Example 17. Plagal movement in *Quatre Pièces*, III. *Molto tranquillo*, m. 23-28.



This meditative movement, by virtue of the piano dynamic level and timbral quality of both instruments, has an intrinsic intimacy, while sovereignty of the individual line is maintained.

Harmony

Because of the polyphonic nature of *Quatre Pièces,* contemporary pitch theory of selection and application compel investigation of the appearance and order of pitches in order to determine an underlying harmonic language. Denisov's eclectic approach to harmony requires analysis of pitch order and arrangement at the cellular and global levels, and although he did not speak to the harmonic language used in *Quatre Pièces,* he noted that he did not use any serial organization of pitches.[7]

Overall analysis of the pitch components reveals a recurrence of two three-note cells: 1. two pitches a minor-second apart, separated by an intermediate half-step in opposite direction (e.g. C, D-flat, B); 2. two pitches a whole-step apart, separated by an intermediate half-step in opposite direction to the whole-step (e.g. C, D-flat, B-flat). Both sets 3-1 [210000] and 3-2 [111000], using the Forte designation,[8] are found in the opening of the first movement,[9] and the first literal presentation of the 3-1 set appears in the flute on the fifth through seventh notes (B, B-flat, C). The 3-2 set appears, disregarding pitch repetitions, in the first five notes (E, F-sharp, G). The combined flute and piano voices yield a 3-1 set (E, F-sharp, F and F-sharp, G, F), 3-2 set (F, F-sharp, G and F-sharp, G, A), 3-3 set (F, F-sharp, A), and 3-6 set (F, G, A) (Example 18).

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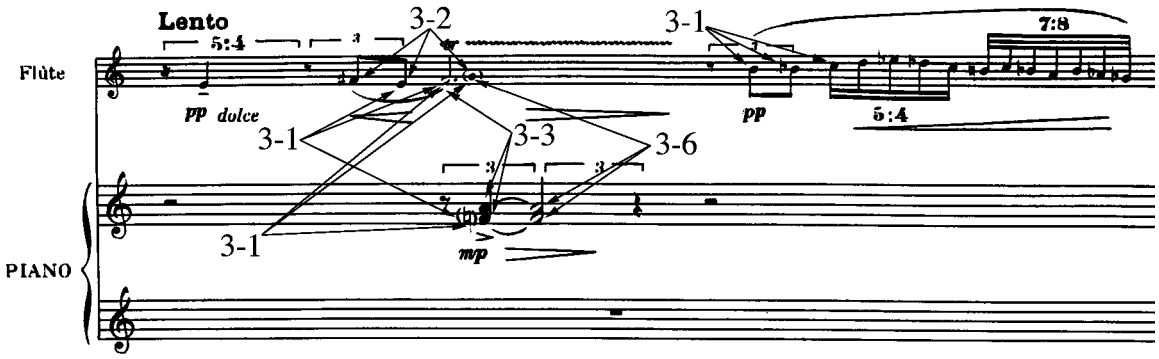
7 Denisov, *Memoirs.* See APPENDIX C: *Interview with Ekaterina Denisov.*

8 Allen Forte, The Structure of Atonal Music, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 179.

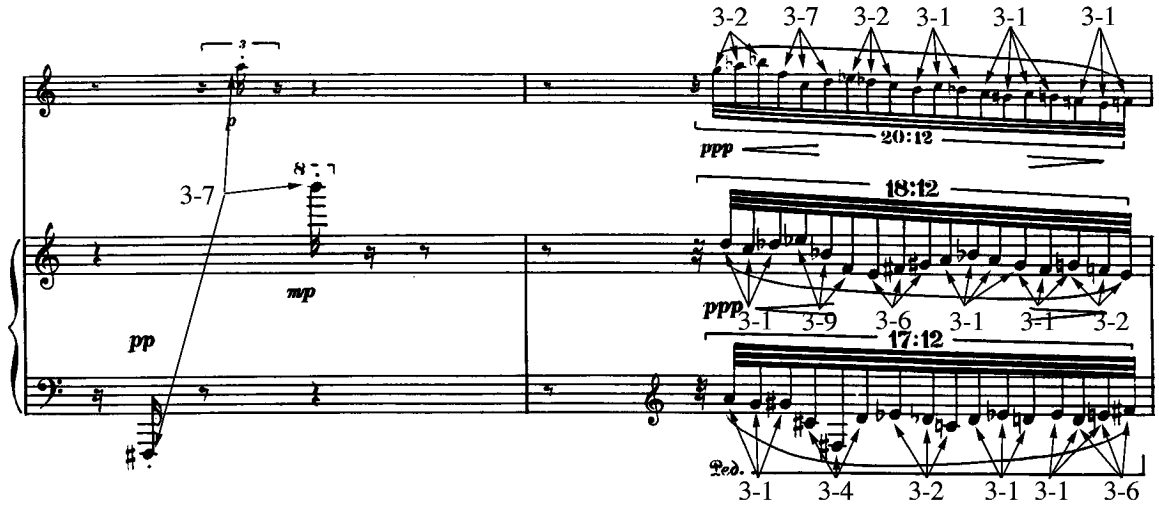
9 Denisov used these sets often in reference to himself (Edison: E-D-S/E, D, E-flat [210000] and Denisov: D-E-S/D, E, E-flat [210000]) and Shostakovich (D-S-C/D, E-flat, C [111000]).

Example 18. Opening Sets in *Quatre Pièces*, I. *Lento*, system 1.[10]



These sets provide the basic melodic and harmonic material of *Quatre Pièces* and are discernable to the listener creating cohesion of melodies within and between movements. The degree to which the sets appear within individual parts differentiates one voice from another, a fact which is particularly effective during the "viscous streams" (Example 19).

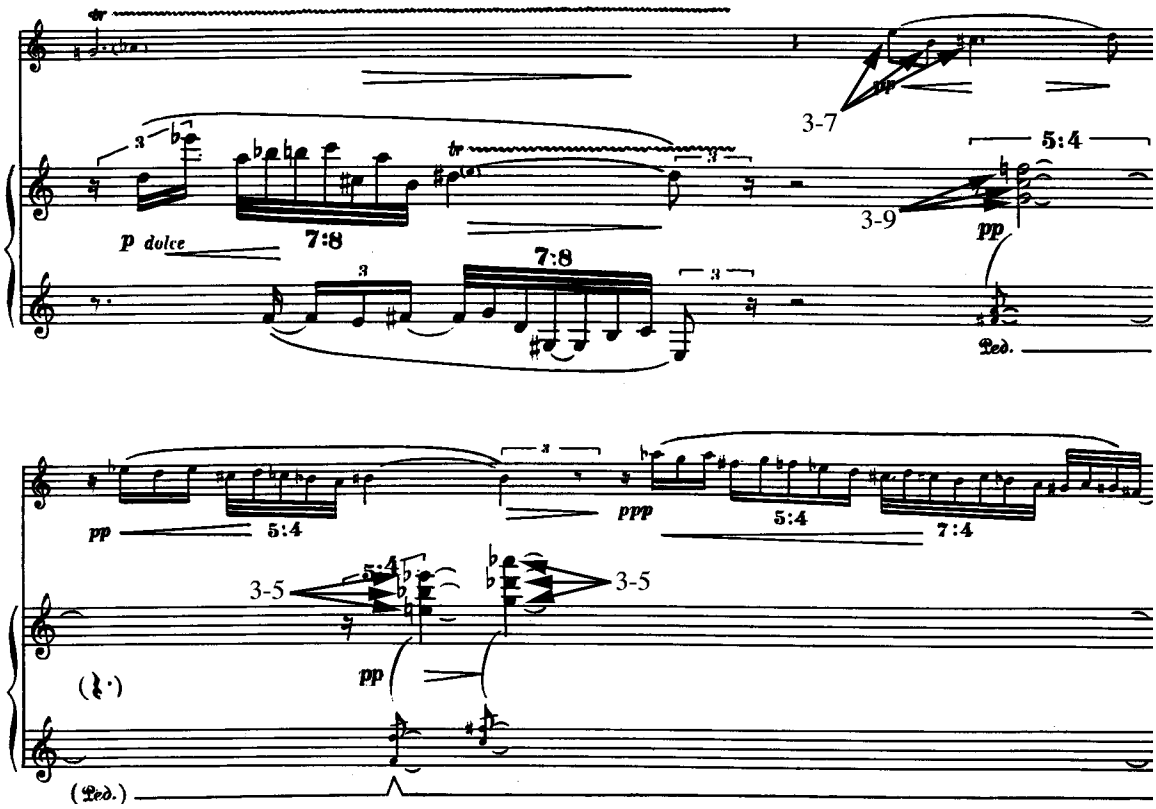
Example 19. 'Viscous Stream' Set Presentation in *Quatre Pièces*, IV. *Agitato*, m. 7-8.



[10] Denisov's *Peniture* (1970) opens with the same E, F-sharp, E statement.

Difficulty arises when relating vertical harmony to the opening sets as compliments. The dominant interval of the half-step, with exception sets 3-6 and 3-9, is found in the three-note harmonies and reveals an intervallic kinship between melody and harmony. The 3-5 set (and less often the 3-9 set) is predominantly used in three-note vertical harmonies[11] (Example 20).

Example 20. vertical harmony in *Quatre Pièces*, I. *Lento*, systems 2 and 3.



A comprehensive account of these sets is beyond the scope of this investigation, but kinship of melody and harmony is apparent with the dominant appearance of the

[11] Kholopov and Tsenova label these vertical harmonies as 'static tone clusters.'

half-step in these sets. This relationship provides cohesion between phrases and movements unifying the work as a whole.

Formal Structure[12]

Denisov writes, "I make no formulaic decisions of when rests come, it's intuition,"[13] and as the individual voices create musical dialogue, the placement of rests organizes the structure of his works much like pauses in a conversation. Considering rests, note duration, and tempi, the movements reflect general characteristics of sonata movements.

The first movement, *Lento,* presents melodic and harmonic material in a fantasy prelude. The second movement, *Allegretto*, utilizes this material in a brisk measured quasi-scherzo, although the meter is not entirely perceptible by the listener. The traditional slow third movement, *Molto tranquillo*, presents melodic material in a contrapuntal style that is more obvious to the listener due to the strict meter. The fourth movement functions as a *finale brillante* unifying the material and presenting the melodic/harmonic sets in Denisov's characteristic gestures.

Viewing the work in it's entirety, the movements function as a theme and variations, with a fantasy prelude as first movement and a development placed as the third movement. Movements II and IV function as character variations, a scherzo and toccata, respectively. Overall, the movements progress and develop the melodic/harmonic

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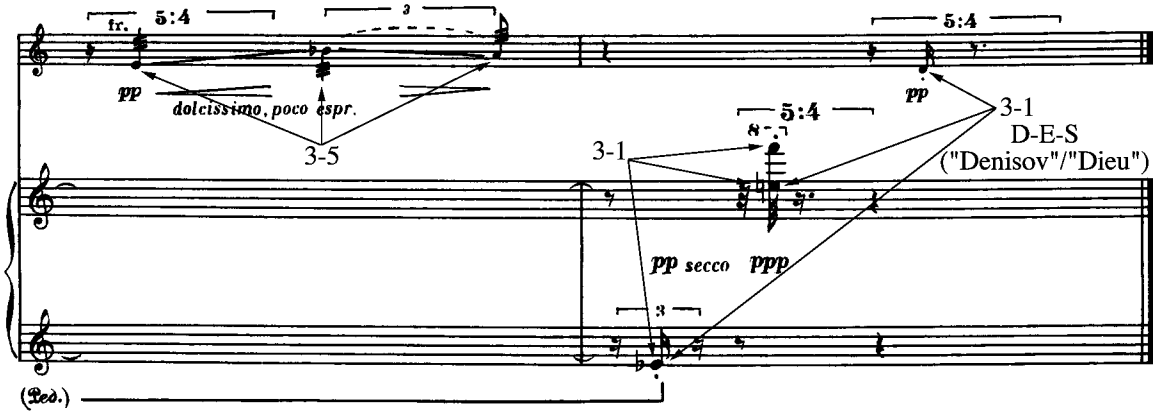
12 Refer to APPENDIX E for the manuscript score.

13 Denisov, *Memoirs.* See APPENDIX C.

sets, ultimately arriving at the final statement of the 3-1 set (D, E, E-flat, omitting the F) spelling Denisov's signature D-E-S.[14]

Example 21 Concluding Set in *Quatre Pièces, IV. Agitato,* m. 23-24.



Despite the set organization of the work, the critical individuality of voice pervades, remaining the overlying characteristic. Unification of the work through pitch selection is the only "collective" (in the Socialist philosophy) characteristic of the work. Pitch functions as the traditional vocabulary for the musical dialogue outside a controlling meter, with the exception of the third movement. Denisov's structuring of independent, anti-collective voices produces a cohesive work without formally quelling that independence.

[14] The ordering of notes in this case appears in retrograde - characteristic of Denisov's signature. This is because of Denisov's dual allusion of D, where it also refers to "light" and God (*deus*).

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

Edison Denisov, as a progressive composer whose works reflected trends in western Europe, was regarded as a "formalist" composer within the Soviet Union, enduring sanctions from the Union of Soviet Composers which included boycotts, cancellations of performances, and denial of foreign travel. His compositions were well-received abroad and were published outside the Soviet Union by Universal Edition, Hans Sikorski, C. F. Peters, and Alphonse Leduc et C$^{ie.}$. Disregard for the Soviet 'realist' ideology and his visibility in the West, placed Denisov at odds with the mainstream of Soviet music, relegating him to the position of Professor of Orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory, rather than an appointment in composition. Eventually Denisov received limited performance within the Soviet Union; however, it was not until the reforms of Glasnost and Péréstroïka that Denisov was awarded with a commission from the government and allowed to teach composition. Regarding Denisov as the most influential Russian composer living in the Soviet Union, in 1990 a group of younger composers elected him to serve as president of the newly-organized Association of Modern Music.

Denisov's compositional style, considered antagonistic and nonconformist by the Soviet regime, is independent of any particular school or compositional paradigm. Study of "formalist" compositions by Debussy, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Webern led Denisov to develop an eclectic compositional language based on independence of lyricism.

The Sun of the Incas (1964), his first composition to gain international recognition, was followed by a number of chamber works commissioned by preeminent artists including Aurèle Nicolet, Heinz Holliger, and Jean-Marie Londeix, and as his compositional language matured, Denisov contributed to the symphony, opera, and *music concrète* genres.

Denisov's eclectic compositions are strongly lyric, highly polyphonic, and full of rhythmic ambiguity. His conspicuous attention to individuality of line in solo, chamber, symphonic, and stage works, is evident in the copious number of independent parts notated in his scores, and the autonomy of these independent voices by rhythms precisely-notated avoiding vertical sonorities. Preoccupation with individual lines, coupled with Denisov's ardent support of progressive composition, indicates his overriding artistic belief in freedom and independence. Belief in the individual superseding that of the collective, a characteristic of anti-collectivist thought, permeates Denisov's music.

His 1977 composition, *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*, effectively displays his compositional style through use of independent contrapuntal lines related by commonality of pitch sets which unify the four movements into variations on the original thematic material. Independent voices are presented as simultaneous melodic streams, and the complexity and variety of cross rhythms, notated both traditionally and in ratio-governed groups, indicate the discrete nature of each melodic voice, drawing attention to their independence, as evidenced in Denisov's own words:

> . . . today activity and impulsiveness are almost indispensable conditions of communicability. Pointed and displaced rhythms, and the confrontation of an apparently arhythmic improvisation with a basic rhythm that always restores the time-pulse presents us with a conflict of different relationships to musical time, and a dialectic of the interaction of the process, different in intention, of its articulation. This now captivates and intrigues the listener. . . [1]

The resulting dialogue is inherently anti-collective, as the melodic voices "appear" in the time span of the work, rather than "march in step" under the restrictions of meter and vertical harmony. This temporal continuum of melodic streams, punctuated by silence and vertical sonorities, re-enacts the compositional process. Performance of Denisov's *Quatre Pièces,* therefore, chronicles his life cycle of musical composition, beginning with an embryonic cell growing, developing, and adjusting to the ultimate conclusion, an emancipation from time, and this style trait signifies emancipation from the constraints of the collective Soviet Socialist contract.

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[1] Edison Denisov, "New Music and Jazz," *World of Music* X/3 (1968), 34.

APPENDIX A

COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY EDISON DENISOV WITH FLUTE IN A PRIMARY ROLE

COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY EDISON DENISOV

WITH FLUTE IN A PRIMARY ROLE

Solo

Solo pour flûte 1971, (Cologne: Gerig, 1973)
Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
Premiered 29 April 1973 by Aurèle Nicolet, Witten
Duration: 3'

Sonate pour flûte seule 1982, (Paris: Leduc, 1985)
Premiered 15 February 1984 by Paul Meisen, Münster
Duration: 16'

Deux Pièces pour flûte seule 1983, (Leipzig: Deutsche Verlag für Musik, 1986)
Duration: 15'

Cadenzas pour la Concerto pour flûte et harpe d'Mozart, (Paris: Billaudot, 1997)
Premiered 7 December 1997 by Andràs Adjoran and Xavier de Maistre, Munich
Duration: 5'

Concerto

Konzert für Flöte, Oboe, Klavier und Schlagzeug 1963, (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1968)
Dedicated to Kazimierz Serocki
Premiered 24 September 1964 by "Musica viva pragensis," Warsaw
Duration: 12'

Konzert für Flöte und Kammerorchester 1975, (Leipzig: Peters, 1980)
Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
Premiered 22 May 1976 by Aurèle Nicolet and Hans-Peter Frank, cond., Dresden
Duration: 24'

Konzert für Flöte, Oboe und Orchester 1978, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1979)
Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet and Heinz Holliger
Premiered 24 March 1979 by Aurèle Nicolet and Heinz Holliger, soloists, Andrezi Markowski, cond., Cologne
Duration: 32’

"Der Weihnachtsstern" für Sopran, Flöte und Streichorchester nach Versen von Boris Pasternak 1989, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1989)
Premiere 28 December 1989 by Yelena Bryleva and Dmitry Denisov, soloists, Yuri Bashmet, cond., Moscow
Duration: 10'

Konzert für Flöte, Vibraphon, Cembalo und Streichorchester 1993, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1993)
Dedicated to Heinz Herrtag
Premiered 17 August 1993 by Dmitry Denisov, Vladimir Goloukhov, and Ivan Sokolov, soloists, Rudolf Baumhartner, cond., Lucerne
Duration: 15'

Konzert für Flöte, Klarinette und Orchester 1996, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1996)
Commissioned by the German Philharmonie Essen
Dedicated to Dagmar Becker and Wolfgang Meyer
Premiered 24 October 1996 by Dagmar Becker and Wolfgang Meyer, Essen
Duration: 16’

Concerto pour flûte et harpe. (Paris: Billadot, 1996)
Premiered 6 September 1996 by Andràs Adjoran, Marielle Nordmann, and the Orchestre Philarmonique de Radio France, Besançon
Duration: 22’

Flute and Piano

Prélude et Air pour flûte et piano 1961, (Paris: Leduc, 1979)
Duration: 9’

Sonate für Flöte und Klavier 1960, (Leipzig: Peters, 1967)
Dedicated to Alexander Korneyev
Premiered 27 March 1962 by Alexander Kozlov and Galina Rubtsova, Moscow
Duration: 11’

Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano 1977, (Paris: Leduc, 1978)
Dedicated to Aurèle Nicolet
Premiered 21 April 1978 by Aurèle Nicolet and Jürg Wittenbach, Paris
Duration: 10'

Works for Flute and Other Solo Instrument

Sonate für flöte und Gitarre 1977, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1978)
Premiered 25 December 1978 by Irina Lozben and Nikolai Komolyatov, Moscow
Duration: 15'

Sonate pour flûte et harpe 1983, (Paris: Leduc, 1985)
Premiered 7 January 1984 by Marina Vorozhtsova and Olga Eldarova, Moscow
Duration: 10'

Duo pour flûte et alto 1985, (Paris: Leduc, 1989)
Premiered 28 March 1990 by Dmitry Denisov and Igor Boguslavsky, Moscow
Duration: 5'

Sonata pour deux flûtes 1996, (Paris: manuscript)
Premiered 1 November 1996 by Andràs Adjoran and
Marianne Henkel, Egeskov

Avant le coucher du soleil: pour alto flûte et vibraphone 1996, (Paris: Billaudot)
Premiered 12 June 1997 by Pierre-Yves Artaud
Duration: 12'

Chamber

The Sun of the Incas: for soprano and ensemble on poems by Gabriela Mistral 1964, (London: Universal Edition, 1971)
Dedicated to Pierre Boulez
Premiered 30 November 1964 by Lydia Davidova, soprano and Gennady
Rozdevstvensky, cond., Leningrad
Duration: 21'

Italian Songs: for soprano, violin, flute, horn, and harpsichord on poems by Alexander Blok 1964, (Budapest: Muziska, 1973)

Premiered 10 May1966 by Lydia Davidova, soprano and Igor Blazhkov, cond., Leningrad

Duration: 19'

Quintett für Flöte, Oboe, Klarinette, Fagott und Hörner 1969, (London: Universal Edition, 1971)

Premiered 10 October 1970 by the "Danzi Quintet," Amsterdam

Duration: 6'

La vie en rouge: pour flûte, clarinette, violin, violincello, percussione sur la poèmes de Boris Vian 1973, (Paris: Chant du Monde, 1974)

Premiered May 1973 with Roswitha Trexler, soloist, Zagreb

Duration: 24'

Silhouettes: for Flute, Two Pianos, and Percussion 1969, (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompozitor, 1983)

Premiered 5 October 1969 by the "Tomasz Sikorski Ensemble," Baden-Baden

Duration: 10'

Canon en Mémoire d'Igor Strawinsky: pour flûte, clarinet et harpe 1971, (Cologne: Gerig, 1979)

Premiered 1972, London

Duration: 3'

In Deo speravit cor meum: für Violine (Flöte), Gitarre und Orgel 1984 (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1993)

Premiered 1 November 1984 by Otfried Nies, Reinbert Evers, and Klaus Martin Ziegler, Kassel

Duration: 12'

Sextet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Cello 1984, (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1988)

Premiered 15 July 1985 by the "Capricorn" ensemble, Cheltenham

Duration: 14'

Hommage à Pierre: pour ensemble de chambre 1985, (Paris: Leduc, 1987)
Dedicated to Pierre Boulez
Premiered 31 September 1985 by the "Intercontemporain" ensemble, Baden-Baden
Duration: 10'

*Vier Gedichte von Gérard de Nerval: für singstimme, flöte und klavier*1989, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1996)
Premiere 22 July 1989 by Ernst Haefliger, Aurèle Nicolet, and Andreas Haefliger, Davos
Duration: 10'

Quatour pour flûte, violin, alto et violoncello 1989, (Paris: Leduc,1998)
Premiere 7 November 1989 by Dmitry Denisov, Yevgenia Alikhanova, Tatiana Kokhanovskaya, and Olga Ogranovich, Trento
Duration: 26'

Variations sur un thème de Mozart pour 8 flûtes 1990, (Paris: Billaudot, 1993)
Premiered 25 January 1991 by Andras Adorján, William Bennett, Michel Debost, Peter-Lukas Graf, Hiroshi Hari, Maxence Larrieu, Wolfgang Schulz, and Ransom Wilson, Munich
Duration: 10'

Dedication: pour flûte, clarinette et trio à cordes 1991, (manuscript)
Dedicated to the "Nash Ensemble"
Premiered 6 February 1992 by the "Nash Ensemble"
Duration: 15'

Sur la nappe d'un étang glacé: für flöte, Oboe, Klarinette, Tromba, Hörner, Posuane, Klavier, Harfe, Vibraphon, und Tonband 1991, (Hamburg: Sikorski, 1991)
Premiered 24 February 1993 with David Robertson, cond., Paris
Duration: 16'

Trio pour flûte, basson et piano 1995, (Paris: Billaudot, 1996)
Dedicated to François and Francine Derveaux
Duration: 13'

Archipel de Songes: pour voix, flûte, vibraphone et piano sur la poèmes de Jean Maheu 1994, (Paris: Billaudot, 1997)
Dedicated to Katia Denisov
Duration: 4'

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH AURÈLE NICOLET

The following interview ocurred on March 26, 2000 at the home of Aurèle Nicolet in Basel, Switzerland.

Aurèle Nicolet, born in Neuchâtel Switzerland on January 22, 1926, studied flute in Zurich with André Jaunet and at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris* with Marcel Moyse. After receiving a *premier prix* from the *Conservatoire* in 1945, he won first prize in the 1947 Geneva competition, and at Wilhelm Furtwängler's invitation, Nicolet joined the *Berlin Philharmoniker* as principal flute, where he remained until 1959. With recordings on the RCA-Victor, Electrola-Columbia, Erato, Eurodisc, Deutsche Grammophon, Pelca, Philips, Telefunken, and Wergo labels, his discography includes standard and avant-garde repertoire in collaboration with other artists including Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Heinz Holliger, Ralph Kirkpatrick, Jean-Pierre Rampal, and Karl Richter.

Interview with Aurèle Nicolet
March 26, 2000
Basel, Switzerland

Brian Luce When did you first meet Edison Denisov and which works of his did you play or premiere?

Aurèle Nicolet Many of Denisov's works are written for me. The first contact I had with Denisov came about through publishing a book of modern pieces by many composers.[1] Denisov composed the *Solo pour flûte* in 1971 for the book, which I have played many times.

At a concert in Leningrad, during a tour of the Soviet Union with chamber orchestra in the '70s, I was approached by a KGB agent who requested "please don't play the music of Denisov, it is music for 'specialists.'" The second and third concerts of the tour were performed in Moscow, where I met Denisov for the first time. I was not aware that my performance would be good or bad for Denisov [as a dissident composer]. I played three encores including the music of Debussy, Bach, and Denisov. After I finished playing the Denisov work, the audience erupted in applause - like a political demonstration! Following the performance I met Denisov for the first time. I asked him if he liked my performance and he responded "yes, good!" Shortly after my concert, Denisov received the first visa to travel abroad.

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[1] Aurèle Nicolet, ed. *Pro Musica Nova: Studien zum Spielen Neuer Musik*, (Kölon: Musikverlag Hans Gerig; New York: MCA Music, 1974).

The next piece written for flute by Denisov is the *Concerto pour flûte et orchestre* (1975) commissioned by the Dresden Philharmonic. After I received the score from Denisov I was called one morning with the request to play another piece other than the *Concerto.* I replied that I will travel, not to play other music, but to play Denisov. Apparently the story is that the Society of Composers [Union of Soviet Composers] from Moscow sent a letter to the director in East Germany requesting "please do not program Denisov." The first conductor and I decided to play the *Concerto* without hesitation.

The work is very interesting, and represents the best period of Denisov's composition. The instrumentation is very interesting: solo flute, two clarinets, bass clarinet, celeste, harp, two percussionists, six violins, five violas, four violoncellos, and three contrabasses [all individual parts]. It is a resistance work against the political atmosphere in Russia. In the entire work, there is never a tutti. No one plays together with another on the same part. You see that all the violins have a separate part each, never a unison. Much of the figuration is played on reaction,[2] especially when divisions of the beat are in odd numbers - five, seven, etc.. There is often a dialogue between the flute and percussion. This was very modern at this time - and [the parts are] never together. If the parts are rhythmically together, the pitches belong to different configurations and scales. . . C major, E-flat minor, etc.. You see this is *Anticollectivistche*

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[2] The second movement, *Allegro agitato*, is spatially notated without time signature. The full score indicates the conductor cue sound events based upon temporal alignment.

. . . anti-collective.[3] His manuscript is very clear, but very small. The third movement is a form of chorale. He composed this movement on the day of Shostakovich's death [August 8,1975] as an *hommage*.

B. L. Did Denisov use the D-S-C-H[4] theme in this movement?

A. N. The third movement contains a cadenza which indicates the performance of quarter tones and whistle tones, but no multiphonics or singing. After the cadenza, the movement includes a reprise of the first movement.

And I played this with Boulez at I.R.C.A.M. and in Stuttgart and Israel . . . many times. I think that it is a very good concerto. In France, Alain Marion played this piece also. But it was at I.R.C.A.M. that Boulez explained - this to the audience - that the flute player is correct. "Don't think that he [Nicolet] is out of tune, the notes are pitched in quarter tones . . . the piece is *avant garde* [style]."

Two years later Denisov wrote a concerto [*pour flûte et hautbois*] for [Heinz] Holliger and me. It was first performed in Cologne and later in Hong Kong. Afterward he wrote a smaller piece, the *Serenade pour flûte et guitarre.* It is folk-like . . . a little Spanish. It was published by Sikorski. Then the *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano,* published by Leduc, then the *Sonate pour flûte seule,* and another piece [*Deux Pièces pour flûte seule*] for a German flute player - I cannot remember who - a little like the *Sonate.* There is also the *Duo pour flûte et alto*, published by Leduc.

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3 Denisov's compositional trait of writing similar and/or dissimilar rhythmic patterns using similar pitch-class sets (subsets, related sets, etc.) between ensemble parts to represent individual freedom against communist collectivism.

4 Densiov used Schostakovich's signature (D, E-flat, C, B) in

Denisov's son, Dmitry, is also a flute player whom he wrote a concerto for. . . It's splendid! This *Concerto pour flûte, vibraphone, cembalo, et cordes* was premiered in Moscow in 1993. There is also a piece Denisov wrote *Vier gedichte von Gérard de Nerval für singstimme, flöte und klavier* for Ernst Haefliger. There is also a work for flute and piano that is not printed. The last work written for flute is the *Concerto pour flûte, harpe et orchestre*, printed by Billaudot . . . It is very difficult but not so good. Denisov also wrote cadenzas for the Mozart *Concerto pour flûte et harpe*.[5] The *Musique Romantique pour hautbois, harpe, et trio à cordes* was written - the same year as the first *Sonate pour flûte seule* - for Holliger. The *Sonate pour flûte et harpe*, and the *Quatour pour flûte et cordes* are both published by Leduc. I first premiered the *Quartet* with the group Spivakov in Kolmar.

B. L. More to the point, when and where did you first meet Denisov?

A. N. I first wrote a letter to Denisov to obtain the first *Solo pour flûte*. Then I met him after the concert I played in Moscow. After that we had very good contact. I travelled again to Moscow, three years later. You know he had a terrible accident with the car. He then travelled to France. He always had a very good connection with the French ambassador. . . You see, his model was - the teacher - Shostakovich as the model, and the French music - Debussy.

He studied first, *mathématique*, then piano, picture [painting], and [then] he composed, then wrote to Shostakovich. Shostakovich said [replied in writing] "come to

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5 *Cadences pour Concerto pour flûte et harpe d'Mozart*, (Paris: Billaudot, 1997).

Moscow, I will teach you." And he was very modest - modest conditioning - but *possible.* He [Denisov] was the teacher of instrumentation. He travelled, for the first time, outside the Soviet Union to Dresden, if I recall correctly, for the premiere of the flute *Concerto* [1975]. After he left the Soviet Union, he lived in Paris and . . . you know the story, accident, cancer, and Katia is with their two daughters.[6]

He spoke very good French and a little German also. He was interested in all the works of French poetry: Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé. He was a good painter and very gifted - multicultural.

B. L. How would you describe the first *Solo pour flûte seule*?

A. N. It is dramatic - like Karetmikov[7] [Nicolet sings, displaying tongue clicks and rapid passages]. Then it has moments of the Russian soul [Nicolet sings]. I played and thought it displayed more *intérieur* - not *romantique,* but with soul. He also spells B-A-C-H but it is very short - much more simple - in relation to the *Sonata pour flûte et piano* (1960). In the *Sonata* there are no quarter-tone pitch bends. He quotes [spells with pitches] E-D-E-flat - Denisov - and with *mi bemol* [E-flat minor] - Shostakovich.[8] Like in the Vienna School - Schoenberg.

It is difficult to speak about a very good friend. And he wrote me many letters

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6 Denisov moved to Paris in 1994 with his wife Ekaterina and two daughters.

7 Nicolai Karetnikov (1930-94), Composer, influenced by serial techniques, who became one of the leading figures of the post-Stalin avant-garde.

8 Denisov used both D-S-C-H (D, E-flat, C, B), known as the Dmitry Shostakovich initials set, and the E-D-S-D-E-S (E, D, E-flat, D, E, E-flat), Edison Denisov set, in several works. Shostakovich first used the set in his *String Quartet No. 8*. Refer to Kholopov and Tsenova, *Edison Denisov*, (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 80 and 191.

before he died - I think the last letter, written on November 17, 1996.[9] And he said that he felt badly.[10] He did travel to Switzerland as well.

B. L. Then you knew Denisov for over twenty years.

A. N. No, over thirty years. Since I met him in Moscow between '70 and 75. I was in Moscow two or three times between 1970 and 1975.

B. L. Did he ever speak to you about his professional situation in Moscow, especially his relationship with the Union of Soviet Composers?

A. N. Yes, he was treated like Shostakovich. He had a very small job at the conservatory - orchestration, not composition.

B. L. Were there any other occasions where you were asked by the KGB, and other communist operatives, to not play the music of Denisov?

A. N. Yes, yes. But it was dangerous, at this time, to speak on politics. And the [Denisov's] resistance against the Stalinist politics is in his scores. He never spoke openly or his resistance to the Soviet policies. - the same attitude as Shostakovich and Prokofiev. We, as Westerners, cannot understand the political situation. He mostly composed at a musician's house in the north near the Finnish border - Kariella - in the summer without family. He composed many works very fast. What was dangerous? In my opinion he was strong and threatened the communist Composers Union.

B. L. Did you play Denisov's works at I.R.C.A.M.?

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9 Densiov died on November 24, 1996 in a Paris Hospital.

10 See appendix Letters to Aurèle Nicolet from Edison Denisov.

A. N. I played the *Concerto* [*pour flûte et orchestre*] at I.R.C.A.M. with Boulez conducting. I also played the *Concerto* in London, with the BBC Orchestra, in Stuttgart, and in Switzerland. I played this concerto many times.

B. L. Were you asked, by the KGB, to play other pieces instead of Denisov, like the music of Mozart or Ibert?

A. N. Yes, always Mozart.

Now we play nothing of Denisov - only the works of Schnittke or others. And Americans don't know [his music], right?

B. L. No, not very much.

A. N. But, we [Europeans] don't know the American music either. We know the music of Ives, Reich, Cage, Glass. We also know the music of Barber, but it is old [not *avant garde*] music.

I was at the Juilliard School last year to teach. There were very good pupils, but they had no idea of modern European music. They didn't know the *Sequenza* of Berio. It is a very modern piece for them. They like the music of Barber, Griffes, or music like that - now the music of Liebermann. Although, the Bernstein *Halil* is a good piece.

It is interesting to hear the period of music played in American broadcasting. The music broadcast is perhaps composed as late as 1950 - Barber. But in Europe it is very different.

B. L. Can you speak specifically about Denisov's *Quatre Pieces pour flûte et piano*?

A. N. In the first movement, there is always the *melisme* like a meditation. The passage

is never absolute chromaticism, but uses small intervals. The art of Denisov is in sound and orchestration. The piano plays very high in the right hand. But the movement is not serial. It is based on a variety of intervals. He always liked [to write] the rhythms 5:4 and 7:8, etc.. The first movement is a *lamentoso.* Again he quotes Shostakovich [the notes D, E-flat, C, and B]. Then he uses quarter-tone shifts.

The second movement is a *scherzando*, but you see there is still never a unison between the flute and piano - this is very important. Like impressionists, he uses these [odd subdivided] rhythms to create color.

B. L. Does he use serial technique in this movement?

A. N. No.

B. L. Did he speak to you about his compositional process?

A. N. No, he did not discuss it, the same as Boulez. I asked Boulez many times about [how he composed] the *Sonatine,* to which he replied "I don't remember," Like Holliger. Denisov composed very fast - Boulez, very slow! The movement, however, is basically a scherzo. The dynamic is also *piano* or *poco piano* - very intimate. The sound and tone color is very good - like Renoir. Even the short notes are played *dolcissimo.*

The third movement is mainly color - art. It is a canon between the flute and piano. Again, there are no big intervals.

The fourth movement combines the second and first movements. There is a reprise of the close rhythms [between the flute and piano], like Karetmikov.

B. L. Why did Denisov change to conventional style and language in compositions like

the *Prelude et Air*?

A. N. It is a light conservatory piece. Like Takemitsu, he wrote for film and had to be conventional in that music. But the sound is similar to his other works. You see, French music is similar to Russian music. Many pieces that are not very good - like those of Rimsky-Korsakov and, from France, the flute music of Georges Hüe - have good sound and always have good orchestration. However, often the German music is better and deeper, but the orchestration is bad.

B. L. Was Denisov able to attend the premieres of his music you performed?

A. N. Yes, in Russia, but it was difficult to travel abroad. He could not travel to Japan. He did come to Germany, France, and Switzerland.

B. L. Did Denisov speak to you about the difficulties he experienced in the Soviet Union?

A. N. It was difficult to speak about such things at this time. Though Stalin died in '53, the Soviet Union under Kruschev and Brezhnev was the same. Even today we will wait to see what happens after the election of Putin.

I remember the first time I was in Moscow, before I met Denisov, to meet Khachaturian. It was terrible, the president of the Composers Union was a Stalinist.

I have a great admiration for Shostakovich. He is great, probably the greatest Russian composer. His works - the Symphonies, the viola Sonata, and quartets - are fantastic. I also admire Mravinsky, conductor of the Leningrad Symphony, who was an outspoken dissident. He conducted with very small gestures. There are many good

conductors in Russia. Young Russians are gifted, not only in the traditional schools for piano and violin, but now in oboe, flute, etc.. I once judged a competition for young players, ages 6 through 15 - all wind players. The winner would play with the Leningrad Symphony. Each played from memory. I recall an oboe player who had studied for only six months who played Vivaldi! The first prize for flute was won by a 10-year old flutist who played the Saint-Säens *Romance* like Pavaroti, with a big sound! I learned that he was from Stalingrad. I congratulated him at the awards ceremony, and he requested, in English "you will be my teacher - please come to Stalingrad." What a temperament, fantastic! All of the peoples of the Soviet borders, from Mongolia and Siberia, are very gifted and can concentrate well. Often they are better than the players from Moscow and Leningrad. Unfortunately the teachers in Moscow and Leningrad are from the old [Soviet] school; but, it is changing. The Russians have a good system for all gifted peoples in dance, music, mathematics, etc.. They all speak several languages, including a little English, or French, or German. The teaching is also very strong, and they work very hard on their music performance.

I recall Denisov telling me that he first studied mathematics, then piano. In one year he played the piano well enough to play the first Beethoven piano *Concerto* with orchestra. He was also skilled in photography, both black and white and color photos. He was also a good teacher. He was from Siberia, behind the Ural [mountains]. It is very cold there, but the people respect good culture.

Since Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, the Russians have had a great

respect for literature and the arts. If you go to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg you will have to wait three hours to get in. The relationships to Western Europe are strong: with France for literature, with Italy for painting and architecture. Think Diderot in Russia corresponding with Catherine. She bought the entire *bibliothèque* of Voltaire. The science is also very good - think of Mendeleev and his *tableaux de la elements*. Many writers, including Checkov, were physicians - Borodin as well.

B. L. Did you and Denisov speak about his youth and other subjects?

A. N. Yes, we spoke - always in French - about youth, literature, music, etc.. He was also very curious of Boulez, Holliger, and Berio. He was so curious about everything.

B.L. Mr. Nicolet, Thank you for your information and anecdotes. I'm sure that many people will find what you have said about Edison Denisov interesting and compelling.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH EKATERINA DENISOV

The following interview occurred on March 27, 2000 at the home of Ekaterina Denisov in Paris, France. The interview was conducted with the aid of flutist, Gaspar Hoyos, who interpreted the interview. The transcript was prepared by Erin Yacho.

Ekaterina Denisov was married to Edison Denisov in 1987 and has catalogued his works for I.R.C.A.M. in Paris.

Interview with Ekaterina Denisov

March 27, 2000

Paris, France

Brian Luce When were you married and what was the artistic and political atmosphere within the Soviet Union like for your husband at that time?

Ekaterina Denisov We were married in 1987. He was coming out of the shadow of Soviet oppression. He started to become well known, recognized. He could start travelling. People began playing him more often in Russia.

B.L. Was this because of Péréstroïka, and were his works permitted public performance by the Union of Soviet Composers?

E.D. Before Péréstroïka, very little non-conformist music was allowed to be performed. Afterward, the law was less strict so his music could be performed.

B.L. Was Tikhon Khrennikov[1] still in charge of the Composers Union?

E.D. Khrennikov was Secretariat of the Composers Union until 1990 - he held the position for forty years.

B.L. How was the professional relationship between Khrennikov and your husband?

E.D. It is difficult to say because they knew each other. But it was Khrennikov who controlled all. But there were people much more dangerous, and much more malicious,

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[1] Tikhon Khrennikov (b. 1913) was Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Composers from 1948 until 1989.

than Khrennikov. Like Shchedrin,[2] for example more dangerous. Everyone knew that Khrennikov was not a good composer. Thus, there was no professional jealousy. He understood that as composer, he was not gifted. But as Secretariat of the Composers Union he held a great deal of power and was content with that.

While other composers who were not powerful bureaucrats but were good composers like Shchedrin, a good professional. Of course there were these professional jealousies between composers. However, Shchedrin was a member of the KGB and controlled part of the Composers Union. With Khrennikov a Communist Party member and Schneidrin a member of the KGB, the Composers Union was controlled on all sides. Therefore Khrennikov could control all the trips abroad because all foreign travel requests passed through the foreign section of the Composers Union.

B.L At the end of Khrennikov's reign, did composers feel free to write avant garde music? Did this help revive the Association of Modern Music in 1990, that your husband was the first to preside over?

K.D Avant garde music was always composed, since the beginning of the Soviet Union, because of small, but strong, interest in it. However, there were not many public performances paid for by the state because it was not regarded well by the communists. After Péréstroïka composers could write avant garde music without fear, but still without hope of funding.

B.L. How was Denisov involved in the formation of the Association of Modern

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2 Rodin Shchedrin (b. 1932) composer who became chairman of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1973.

Music?

E.D. This association was born as a reflection of the Association of Modern Music from the 1930s - this was the first association that started as the official composers organization in the Soviet Union.

Edison was not the leader of the movement. The younger composers, some former pupils, started the Association again. They were not very young people - in their forties. Most were good composers.

B.L. Composers such as Kasparov and Smirnov?

E.D. Kasparov, Smirnov, Ekimovsky, Tarnopolsky. . . Twelve in all. Many were former students. They asked him [Denisov] to be president . . . like Christ and the twelve apostles.

It [the association] lasted for only 5 years. They understood that each composer had his own voice. So it wasn't necessary to remain a group. They could each develop their own musical language.

B.L. Was the Composers Union still involved in musical life, even in the 90's?

E.D. Yes, it was still important to be connected with the composers union; you had to be on their side really in order to have your music played. Yes, the Union did have power, but less power than it previously had.

B.L. Does the composers' union still finance performances?

E.D. The state actually subsidizes commissions and other musical activities around music and continued to as late as two or three years ago. He signed his first and only

commission from the state in ‘86.

The system isn’t a real commission system; because, it’s not like the state says, “We would like you to write a symphony.” No, what really happens is the state makes a commission and the composers present pieces that they’ve already written. After the piece is written, and the secretary in charge of the commission says, “We will buy it,” or “We won’t buy it.” They’re not really commissioning works. Instead, they purchase already written works.

B.L. I understand that Mr. Denisov worked at I.R.C.A.M. When was that?

E.D. September 1990 to April 1991.

B.L. And did he compose works there?

E.D. Yes. He composed *Sur la nappe d’un étang glacé* for ensemble and tape.

B.L. Did he work with Boulez at I.R.C.A.M.?

E.D. Not directly, but they had good relations . . . which is unusual.

B.L. Did he teach students there? Did he influence any other composers?

E.D. No, but there were always people coming to show him their new works. The people who came to show him their compositions didn’t come on official business. They just wanted a friendly opinion or criticism. The same when he travelled to other countries, he did master classes.

B.L. Did he ever speak at I.R.C.A.M. or in the master classes about composition and how he composed?

E.D. He did not speak in general terms about composing. He would speak at conferences

where his music was performed about analysis. Often he would demonstrate the work on the piano himself, or sometimes he would just listen to a recording and explain the music,sometimes before, sometimes afterwards, sometimes before and after.

B.L. Did he ever speak to music theorists about his music? In particular about pitch structure or style, etc.?

E.D. He spoke to students in general, about everything. A flutist,composition student, or musicology student would come to speak to him - the professionals would come as well - because he was rather open.

He would often go to the national conservatory and work on his pieces with the students, not with the musicologists but with the actual performers. For instance he worked with students in the classes of Claude Delangle[3] and Pierre-Yves Artaud.[4]

B.L. Can you talk about his compositional style. In articles, Mr. Denisov's wrote about how the composer formulates his music. Did he ever speak to you about how he composed his music, specifically his *Quatre Pièces pour flûte et piano*?

E.D. In his Russian memoirs, he explains how he wrote *Quatre Pièces:*

The work was written for Aurèle Nicolet, not because of a commission, but because from a friendly conversation between both . . . Nicolet said, "It would be nice if you wrote a piece for flute and piano in the musical language of the concerto."[5]

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3 Claude Delangle, Saxophonist and professor at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris.*

4 Pierre-Yves Artaud, professor of flute at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris.*

5 Denisov dedicated the *Concerto pour flûte et orchestre* in 1975 for Nicolet, who premiered it on May 22, 1976 in Dresden.

Denisov asked Nicolet for advice on the flute language - what is easy to play, what is difficult, what is impossible, what falls best in the fingers, etc. Nicolet replied "forget about it and just write the music the way you feel." It's a piece written for a friend without commission.

The piece is like a mini-projection for greater work, perhaps a symphony or concerto in 4 movements. The first movement is an sonata allegro, not formally, rather in the spirit of the movement - character. The second movement is a scherzo, because it's always unexpected . . . the interplay between the rhythms and silences. The third movement is quasi-classical or neo-classical. It is very calm and a sort of chorale. The arrangement is like a symphony: allegro, scherzo, largo, etc. The last movement is written similar to the first movement and has the character of a coda - this is his favorite movement.

He made no formulaic decisions of when the rests come, it's intuition. Nothing is programmed or calculated. This reflects his love for Webern's music. At the same time he was writing this piece, he was writing an article of analysis on the *Variations for Piano,* Op. 27.

He also finishes each movement on D, which is a symbolic note for Denisov because it is D as in Denisov. Also, D and D major are very symbolic. For him, it is always a symbol for God, D as in "Dieu" ("God").

B.L. Ah, yes.

E.D. You have probably noticed that many of his works finish on a D, it's like a

signature.

About the sonata for *Sonate pour flûte seule*: it is very difficult to write for a flute by itself. The flute has less expressive power than the other instruments. Since Dmitry, his son is a flutist, it may have been written for him. However, there is no specification of who it was written for. Denisov was always attracted to the flute because of its lyrical and poetic qualities. He also didn't write in an entirely modern style except for a few harmonics and multiphonics.

In the slow movement first Denisov was trying to write differently from the great Shostakovich influence and find his own language. It was written in 1982. It's serial, but he was trying to use serialism in his own way apart from Schoenberg's system.

B.L. Did he consider himself a serial composer?

E.D. He didn't like to consider himself as this or that. He did a lot of analyses of the Vienna School though. The *Sonate pour flûte seule* is a serial work, but the *Quatre Pièces* is not.

B.L. There was another piece, the *Prelude et Air* pour flûte et piano which is very different from the *Quatre Pièces*. Is there a particular reason why it is so different. Was it commissioned?

E.D. He did not write about it, but it's possible that his son needed a piece for an examination with certain quality. Actually I think that Dmitry recorded this piece and Edik [Edison] told me that he wrote it in 1961 for the conservatory examination. Look on

the liner notes of the compact disc.[6]

He did write other works that were neoclassic like the *Prelude et Air*, for instance: the *Sonate pour flûte et harpe*.

B.L. Mr. Denisov wrote articles about the composer's process in general, but did he ever speak of his personal inspiration?

E.D. It depends on the work or the situation of course. If there is a commission you must think of how to fill that commission, but sometimes the works would just come, not for the commission just you know…A work would just come.

He was always thinking about the work before starting to write - for the general idea. Wild nature would inspire. He said that basic musical material gives birth to the work - to the shape, the form of the work. You have the material, from then you start building the work.

B.L. Nicolet noted that M. Denisov composed very fast. Is that because he conceived a work long before he wrote it down?

E.D. Not really, he was simply a good professional who knew his craft.

B.L. Did Mr. Denisov speak of the flute itself, the instrument you mentioned that he thought, that perhaps didn't have as much expression but was very poetic, is there any other way he perhaps thought of our instrument, in particular, any other…

E.D. Nothing in particular, except that he was attracted to the instrument, because most

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6 *Edison Denisov*, UL 94316 (Moscow: Vista Vera, 1994). Dmitry Denisov, flute and Maria Parshina, piano.

of his works are for the flute or include the flute, for instance the *Scherzo pour deux flûtes.* He liked to write the percussive techniques [key clicks] for the flute.

B.L. What was it like in the Soviet Union, politically and artistically, when the *Quatre Pièces* were composed?

E.D. Politically, it was the time of Brezhnev still very *anti-liberté*. The state exercised total control and surveillance. He was teaching orchestration for the composers and musicologists at the [Moscow] conservatory.

B.L. Did he ever teach composition? Perhaps privately, not at the conservatory.

E.D. The composers in the class, the orchestration class, took the opportunity to study composition with him. He was teaching how to orchestrate a work, as if you had written it. That's how he was able to unofficially teach many people. Some of the composers in the orchestration class would show him their works.

B.L. Do you remember who these composition students were?

E.D. Yes, Smirnov, Tarnopolsky, Ekimovski, Vustin, many others. These people consider him as their professor of composition, even though he was not officially a professor of composition.

After the Péréstroïka a student from somewhere - either Spain or South America or Central America came to Russia and said that, "I know that Dr. Denisov teachers composition and I want to study with him." So the rector told him, "No. No. He doesn't head composition." The student kept requesting and finally it was arranged so that he would take one student. Officially, he started to teach composition in '92.

B.L. Did Mr. Denisov talk of how he came to music, how he decided to go into composition?

E.D. He started to study mathematics at the university. His parents were interested in his study to become a mathematician, not a musician. At age 16, he began to study music. A neighbor played mandolin and clarinet. He then started to learn piano and some general music classes for amateurs. He prepared to get into a sort of music high school. He then started to compose and wrote to Shostakovich.

B.L. This was in Tomsk, Siberia?

E.D. Yes, Tomsk.

B.L. Shostakovich perceived a musical gift in Edison and advised him to enroll in the Moscow Conservatory. How did he prepare to enter the conservatory from his home in Tomsk?

E.D. Shostakovich advised him to come to Moscow. He failed the first time because of the difficult piano, solfège, musicology, and Russian history examinations.

B.L. Only Soviet music and Soviet history?

E.D. No, all history and music history - Gesualdo, etc.

B.L. Did he write with a particular philosophy in his music?

E.D. He wrote for the spiritual art. He used to tell the story about the premiere of the *Requiem.* Three girls came to him after the performance to thank him for his music, "it brings us light in the darkness." Again this is where he uses the D major tonality.

B.L. This was in the Soviet Union?

E.D. Yes.

B.L. So he was a light for many young composers and other Soviets?

E.D. Yes he inspired the younger generation. They themselves, say that he was the light and inspiration.

B.L. With all of the difficulties Mr. Denisov faced, through the KGB, the Union of Composers, etc., what kept him striving for his musical goal? Why he did not write or compose with the 'Soviet realist' philosophy - the way that the Composers' Union wanted him to - how did he remain true to his heart?

E.D. He never tried to follow any…or to satisfy the union. That's why it was tough for him. The answer is part of the question. He never tried to satisfy anybody. He believed that the world needed his music as a "light." Also his beliefs, he was following the path, motivated by those beliefs.

APPENDIX D

LETTERS FROM EDISON DENISOV TO AURÈLE NICOLET

MARCH 1995 - NOVEMBER 1996

The following letters, from the personal library of Aurèle Nicolet, were written by Denisov between March 19, 1995 to November 13, 1996 to Nicolet. The letter dated November 13, 1996 is the last known correspondence of Denisov as he died on November 24, 1996.

The letters in English are translated from French to English by Erin Yacho.

Paris, March 19, 1995

My dear Aurèle. I am now at home. I got out of the hospital on March 10th. (I have to return there 3 times a week.) How did your work go in Kracow? Heinz[1] called me but I wasn't able to make it to his concerts (March 8th & 9th) because I was in the hospital.

I sent you Mitya's[2] CD with my flute music and I asked Jean Leduc to send you all the edited scores. Did you get them? I would really like to have your opinion of the CD.

Now I'm staying in Paris all the time. In May I have to go to Greece (May 11th) and after that to Moscow. I'll come back to Paris at the end of June and I want to spend July and August in Russia. It would be great if you came to Paris. I'd really like to see you.

Affectionately yours,

Edik

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1 Oboist, composer and conductor Heinz Holliger.

2 Dmitry Denisov, son of Edison Denisov. The compact disc referred to includes performances of music for flute and piano by Edison Denisov. *Edison Denisov*, UL 94316 (Moscow: Vista Vera, 1994)

Paris, January 1, 1996

My dear Aurèle, I really wanted to write the piece for your birthday and I even thought it out in detail, but the chemotherapy makes me absolutely sick (especially my head) and I am unable to work. I wish you a happy birthday and much happiness, success and good health. Tomorrow I'm going to Stuttgart with Katia[3] for the production of *Lazarus* and I'm coming back to Paris on January 22nd (and on the 23rd I'm going . . . to the hospital). I'll try to call you on January 22 in the evening. I think of you often.

Your faithful friend,

Edison

A thousand good wishes!

[3] Ekaterina Denisov.

Paris, June 20, 1996

My dear Aurèle, as always, I was most pleased to receive you letter. It is a shame we haven't seen each other for such a long time and that I wasn't able to come to your conference. But I haven't lost hope that we will see each other again. I'm working on the *Concerto for Flute and Clarinet*. It was commissioned by the Orchestra of Essen[4] and I'm really running behind. Because of my accident,[5] they canceled the production scheduled in '95 and now they set the date for October 24, 1996, but I still haven't written the concerto. It will be in one movement and has to be no longer than 25 minutes, I think. The orchestra has been somewhat specified: alto flute, oboe, English horn, alto Saxophone, bass clarinet, 4 trombones, 6 horns, celeste, harp, 4 percussionists and strings. I have to finish the score in June. But I have little hope. Now Billaudot is editing the *Concerto for Flute and Harp* score and I lost 2 weeks correcting the it, the soloists' parts and <u>all the orchestra material</u>! It took me too long.

I'm writing you from the hospital. I have to go back every 2 weeks until August 1st. In August I want to go to Russia. Miss Nordmann[6] asked me to simplify some harp passages in the 1st and 3rd movements (the left hand). Andràs[7] also asked for a few corrections of the flute part. It is the first time in my life. What do you think (especially about the flute part)? I feel <u>nothing</u> should be changed. In any case, I asked Billaudot to

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4 German Philharmonie Essen.

5 Denisov was injured in an automobile accident in 1994.

6 Marielle Nordmann, harpist.

7 Flutist Andràs Adjoran.

edit all of it without any changes. I really want you to play this concert! You are the best interpreter of my music. And why do you write me about the Danzi *Concerto for Flute and Clarinet*? Does it also exist? Mitya also asked me for the Kazl Stamitz *Concerto* (he wrote to me that he listened to the CD with you and Eddy – is this true?)

In Russia now everything depends on the election results. I voted from here at the Embassy and I want to vote on March 7th the second time.

Very affectionately,

Edik

P.S. I wrote to Heinz (and I sent the score, but he never responds).

Paris, November 13, 1996

My dear Auréle, I am once again in the hospital since a week's time. I'm hoping to be released in a few days. Lately, I have been feeling worse and worse and I haven't been able to write music for 3 months.

How are you? I also sent you my *Trio for Flute, Bassoon and Piano,* but it has now been released by Billaudot, very well recorded. Did Billaudot send you the score and parts from my *Concerto for Flute and Harp*? They promised me they would send you everything before November 1st.

I also want to tell you that Mitya has received (Stamitz) nothing as of today. You wanted to send him everything from St. Petersburg. It is sad because, if I remember correctly, he wanted to play the concert in December.

I made a trip to Germany. On October 24th and 25th we presented my *Concerto for Flute and Clarinet* with an orchestra in Essen. The soloists (Dagmar Becker and Wolfgang Meyer) are really magnificent. Wolf Dieter Hanschild [conductor] did an excellent job. It's too bad that the concerts weren't taped and I don't have a single recording of them. The *Concerto for Flute and Clarinet* (I finished it in July of 1996) lasts 23 minutes and is at Sikorski. They are supposed to record the piece in a year's time.

It is sad that I can't work, I have lots of work now. But I think my doctors must make a decision in the next few days. I will probably have an operation next week...

How is Heinz? I read his book (*Contrechamps*) and really thought it was good.

But most of his scores are at my house in Moscow (there are analyses in his books). He never responds to my letters.

My best to you.
Katia sends her wishes also.

P.S. On November 1st, Andràs made the French premiere of my S*onata for 2 Flutes,* but I was in Germany at the time. On October 21st in Ludwigshafen my *Concerto for Flute and Oboe* was played. But I was unable to go anywhere because of my health.

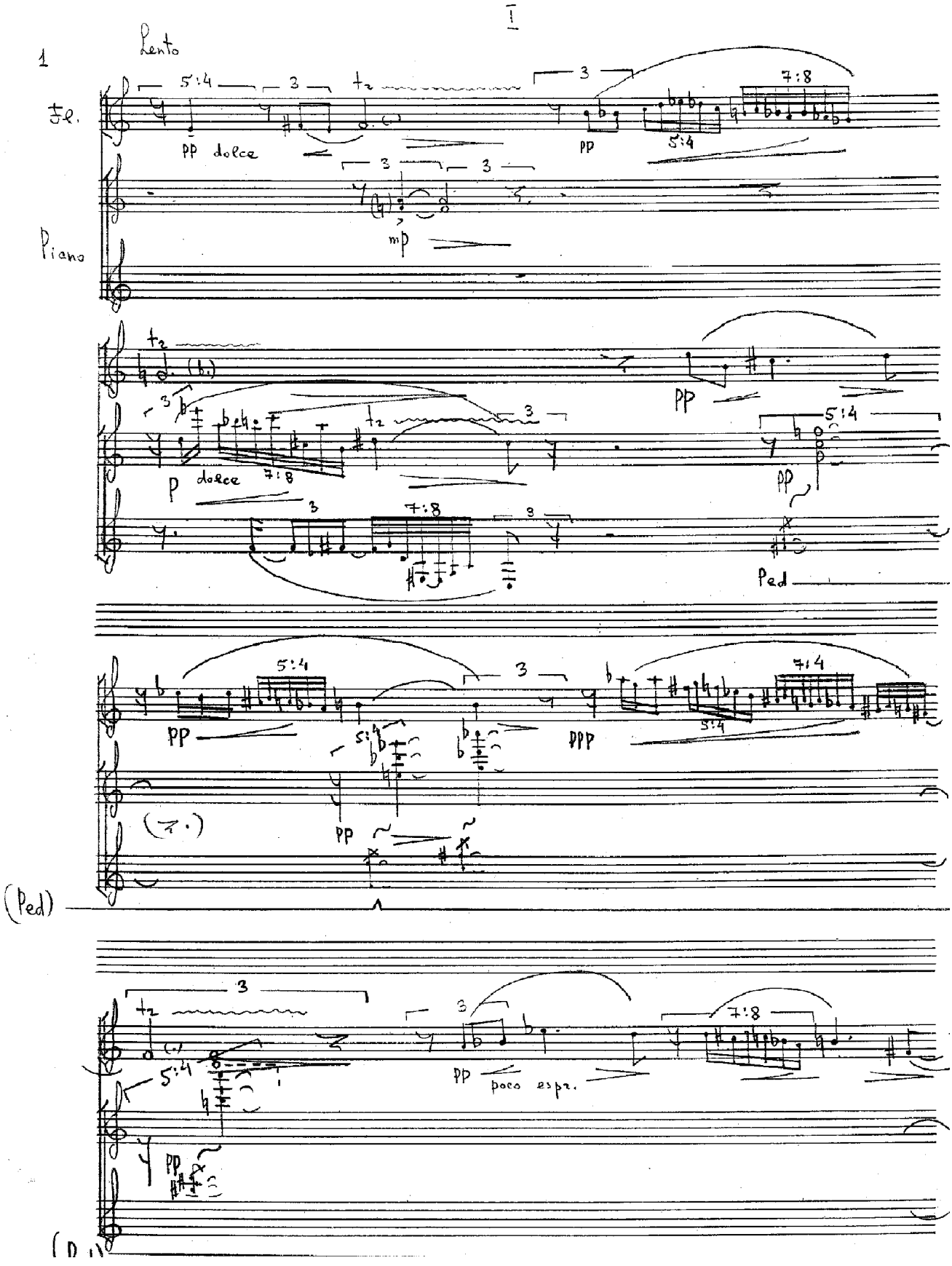
On November 21st, in Moscow, Mitya and Mark Pekesky are going to present the last piece I wrote in August of 1996, *Avant le coucher du soleil* for alto flute and vibraphone (about 12 minutes). I would really like to go to Moscow but it is not possible now.
E. D.

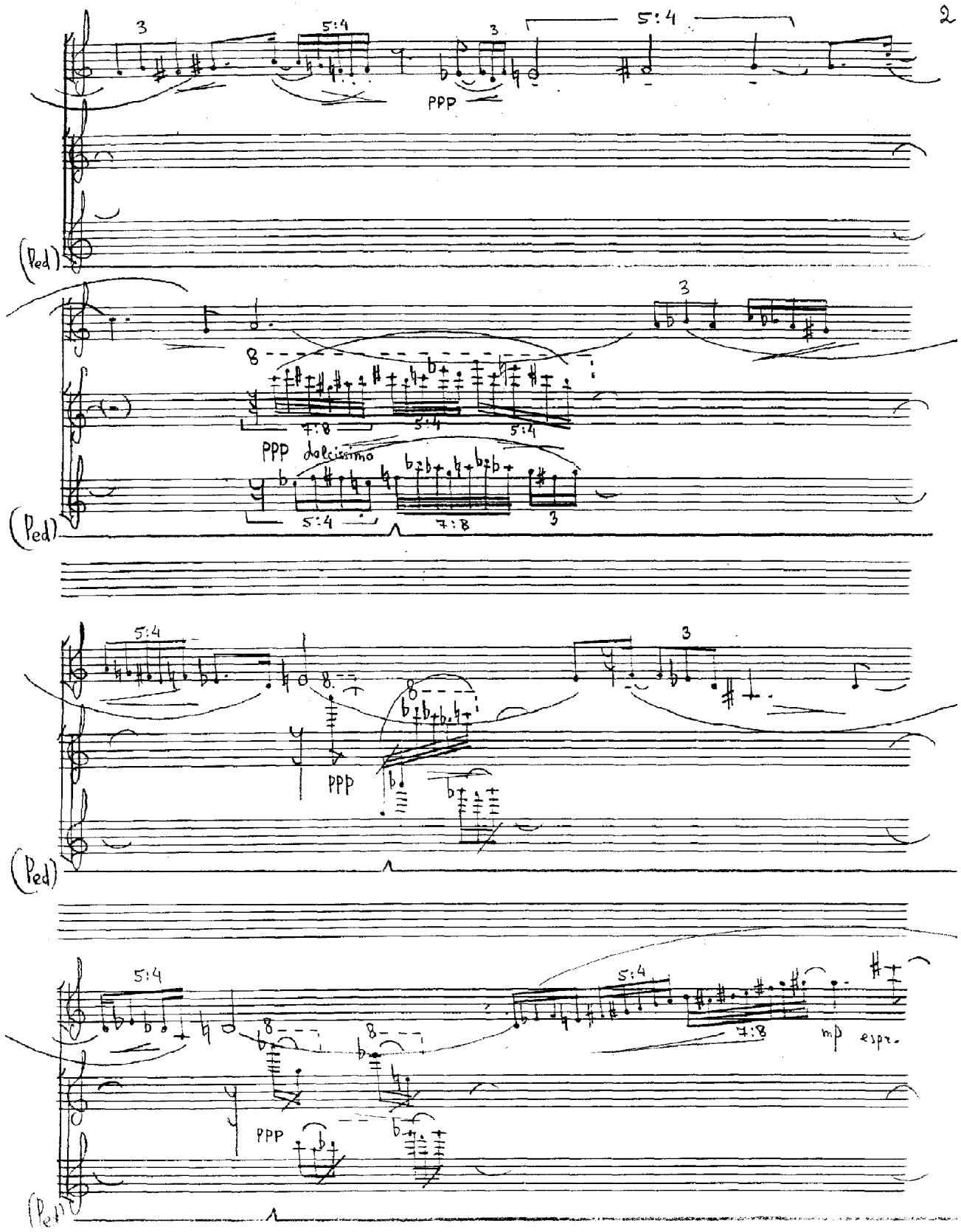
APPENDIX E
QUATRE PIÈCES MANUSCRIPT

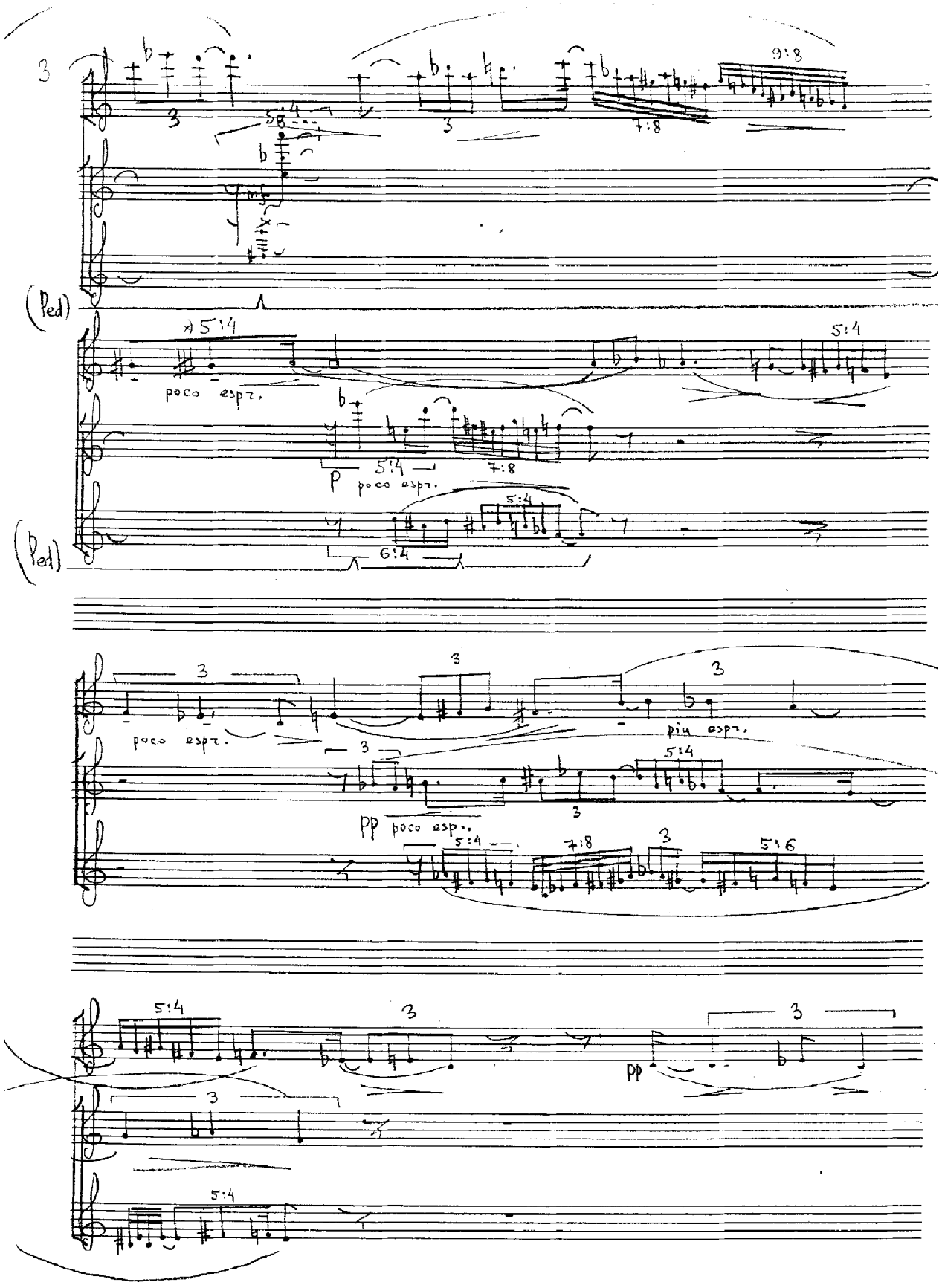
Э. Денисов

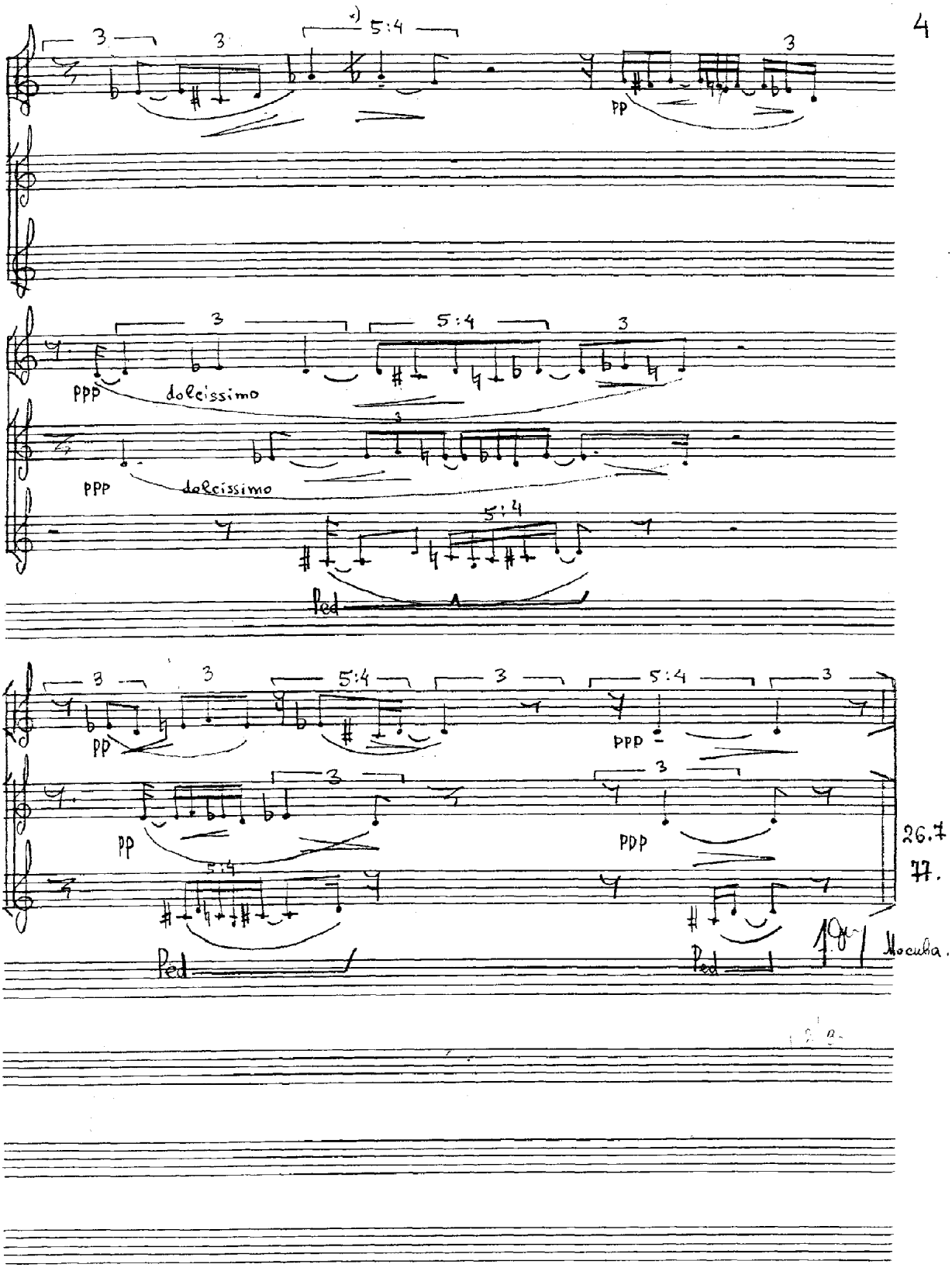
4 пьесы для флейты

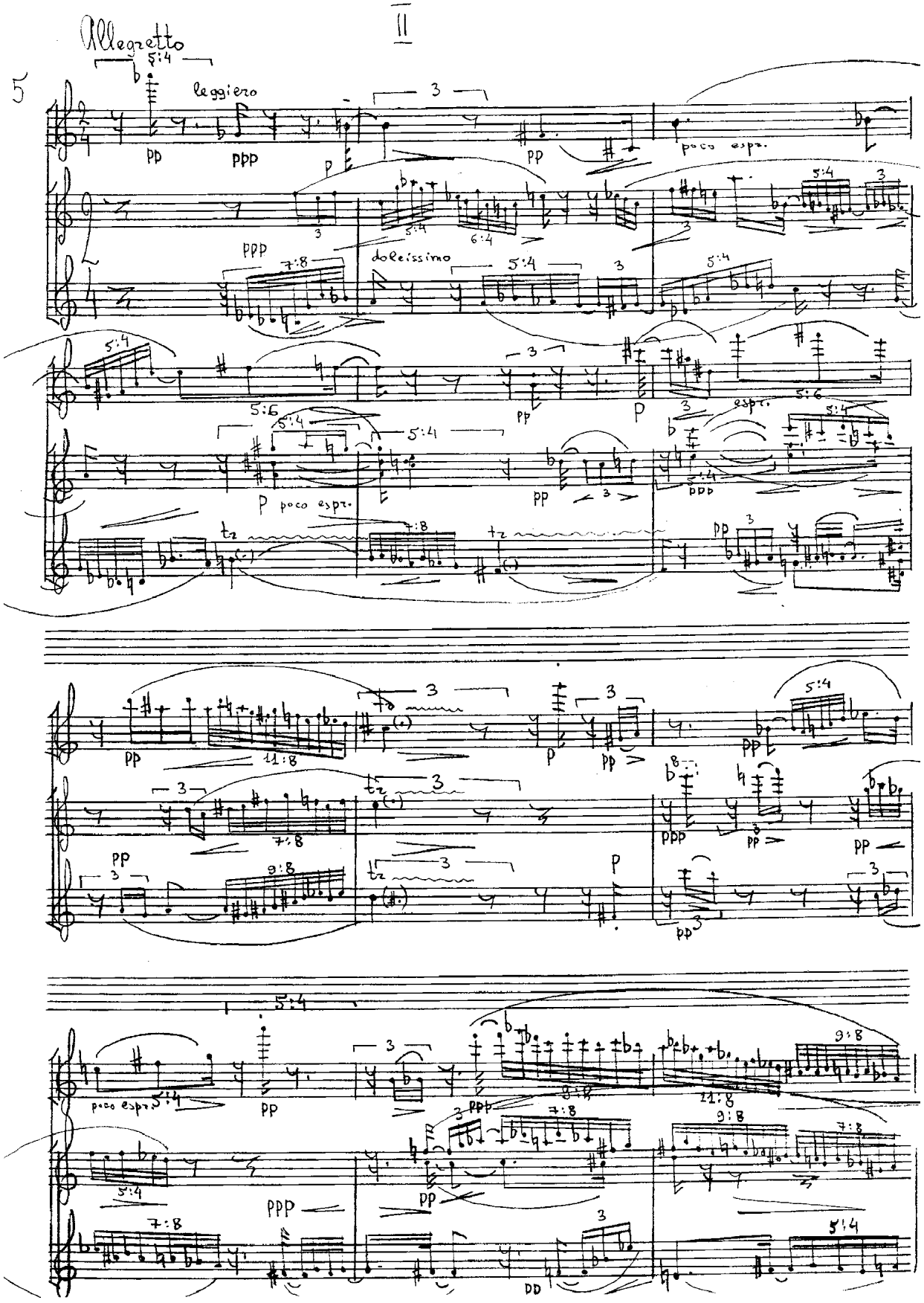
и фортепиано (1977)

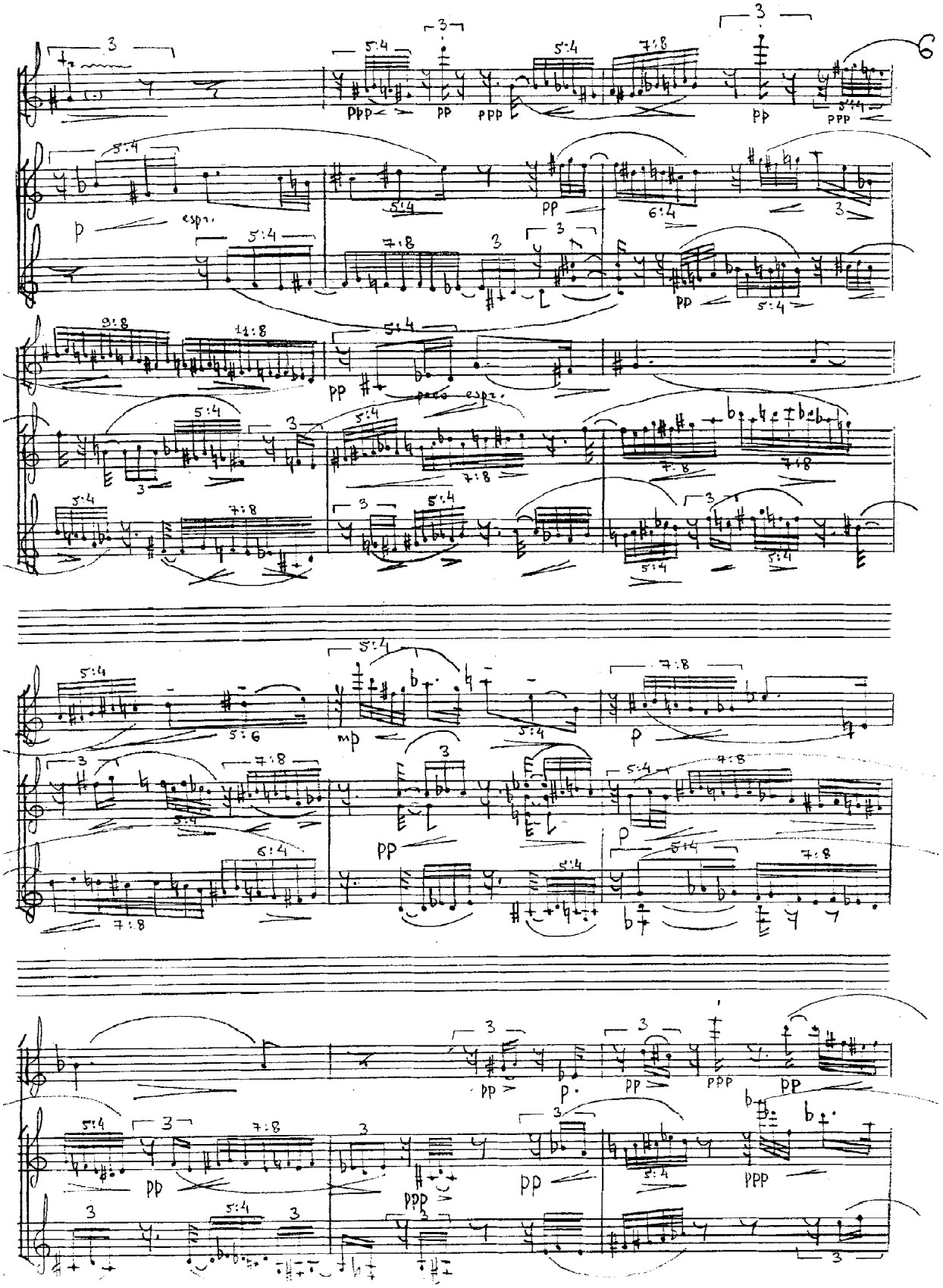

I
1
Lento
Fl.
Piano
PP dolce
mp
P dolce
PP
Ped
PPP
(Ped)
poco espr.

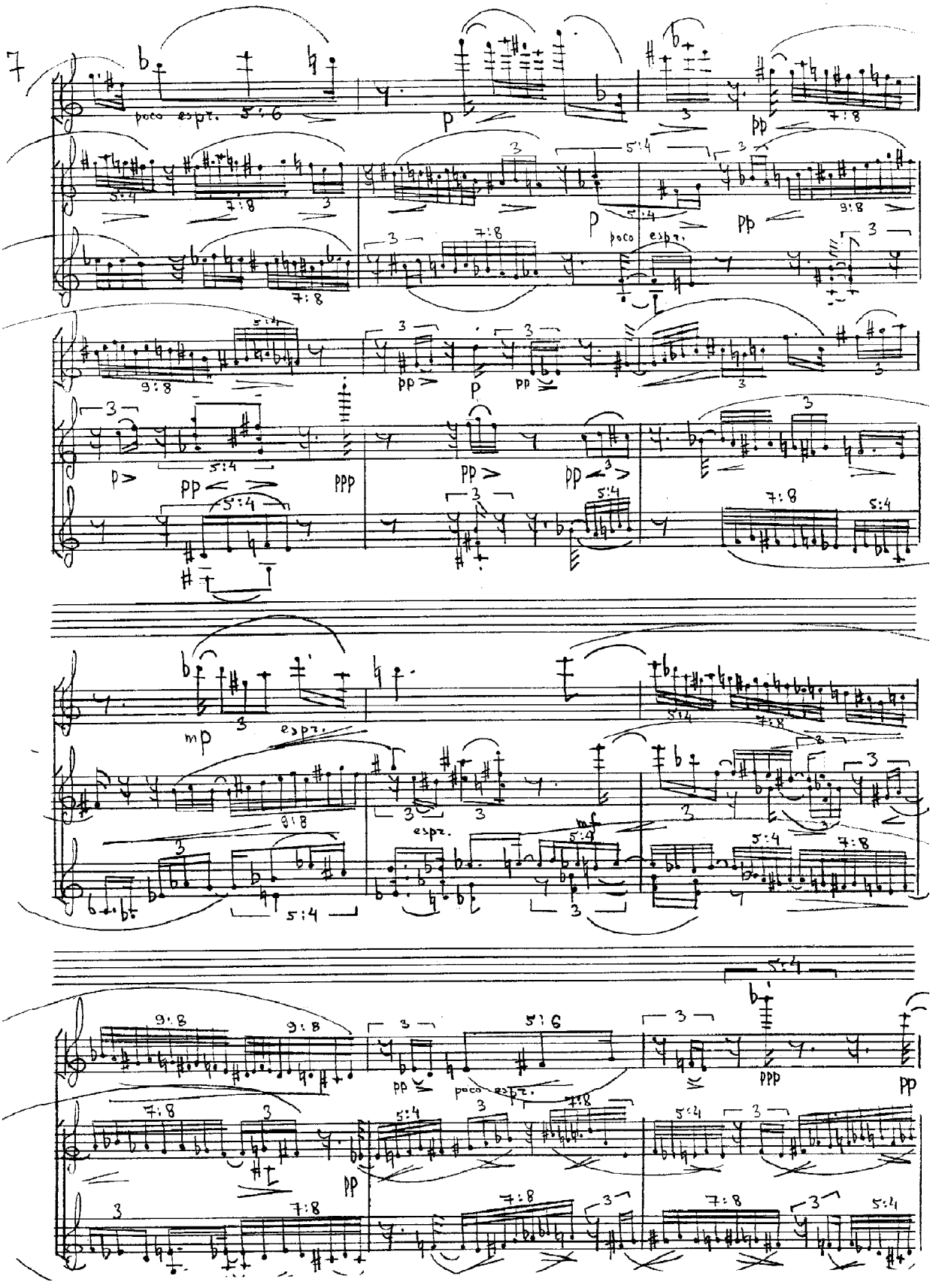

2
5:4
PPP
(Ped)
PPP dolcissimo
7:8
mp espr.

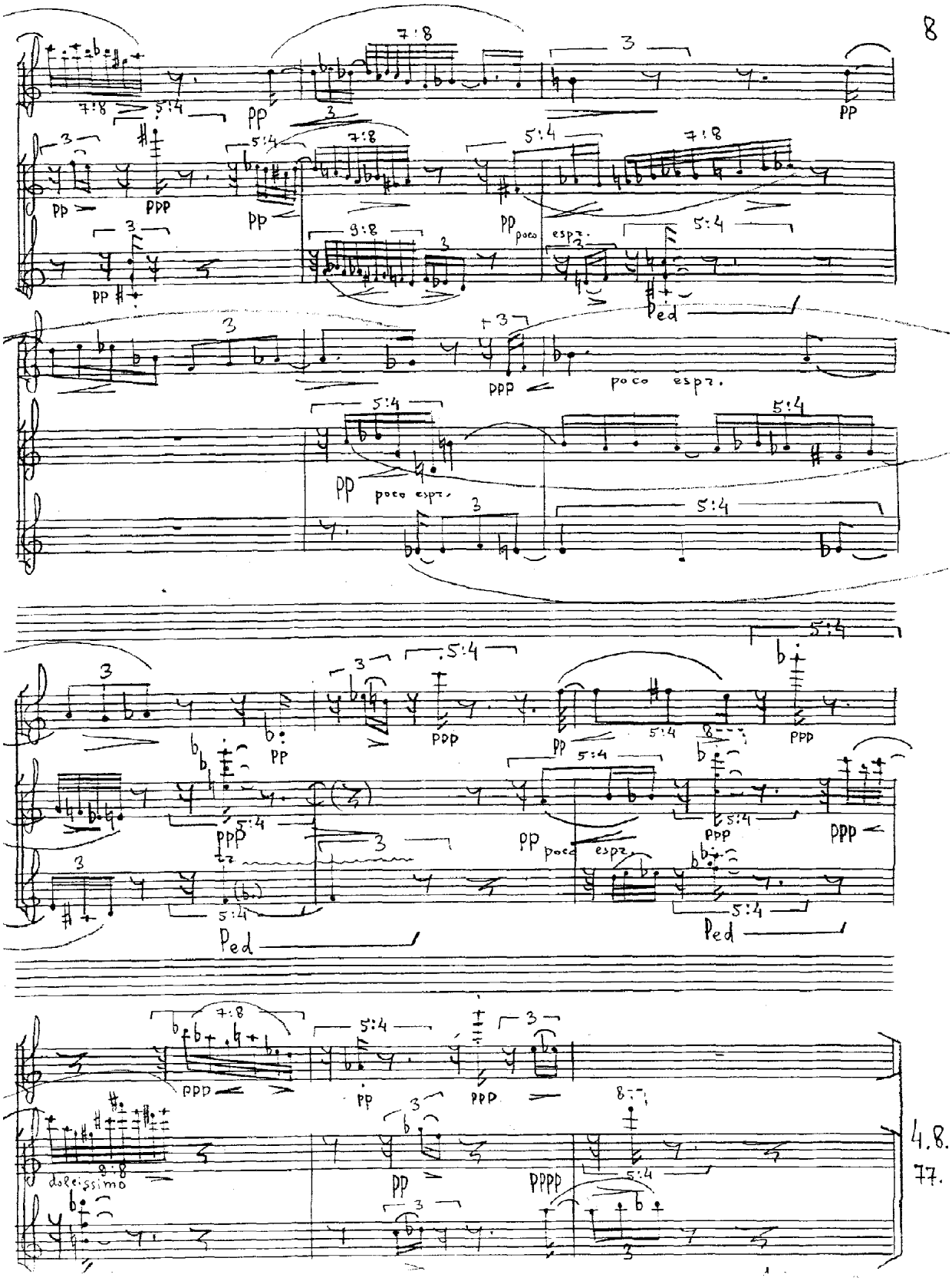

(Ped)
poco espr.
P
poco espr.
(Ped)
poco espr.
più espr.
PP
poco espr.
PP

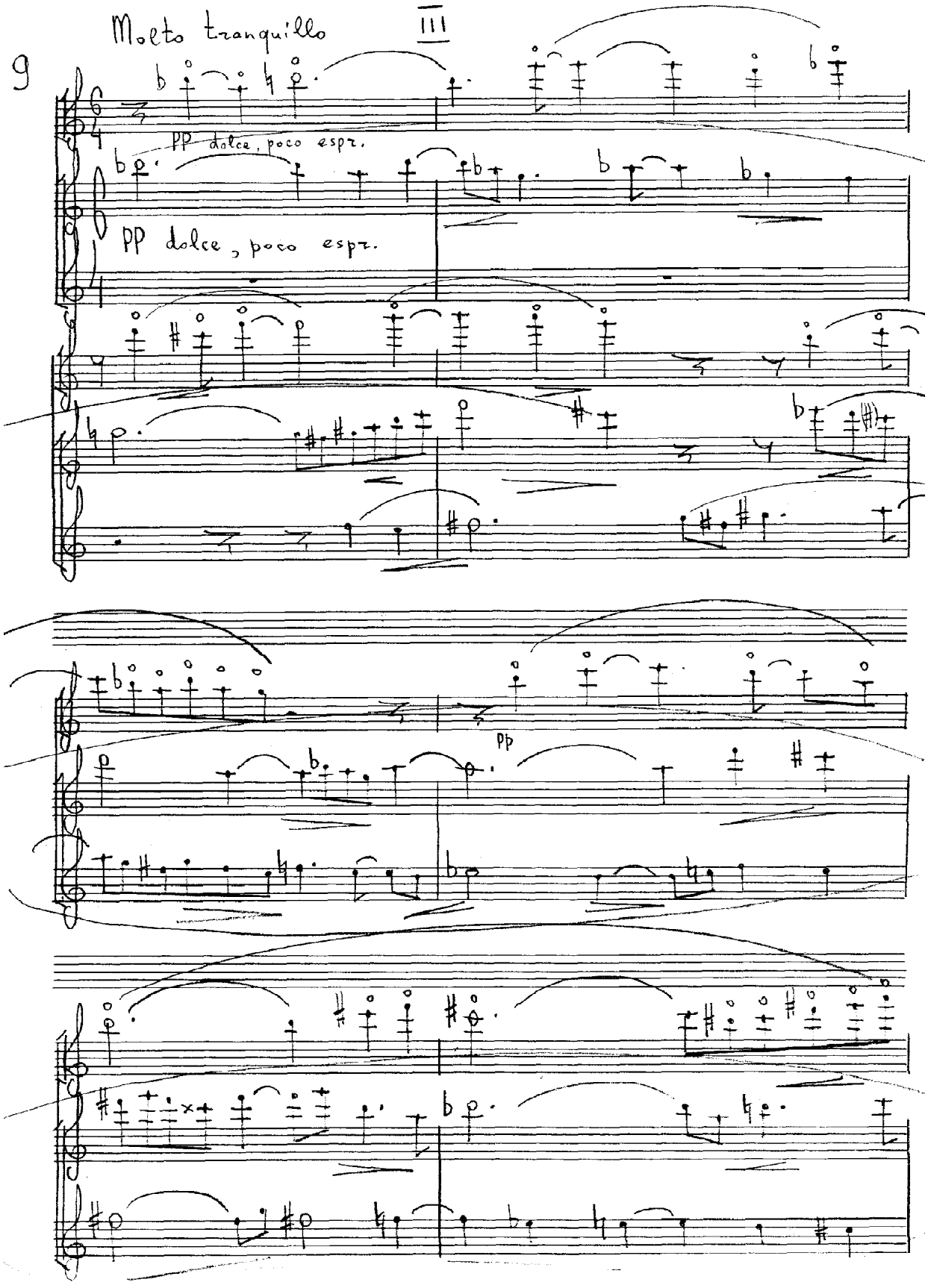

4
3
3
5:4
pp
3
ppp
dolcissimo
5:4
ppp
dolcissimo
5:4
Ped
3
3
5:4
3
5:4
3
pp
ppp
3
pp
3
ppp
5:4
26.7
77.
Ped
Ped
Nocuba.

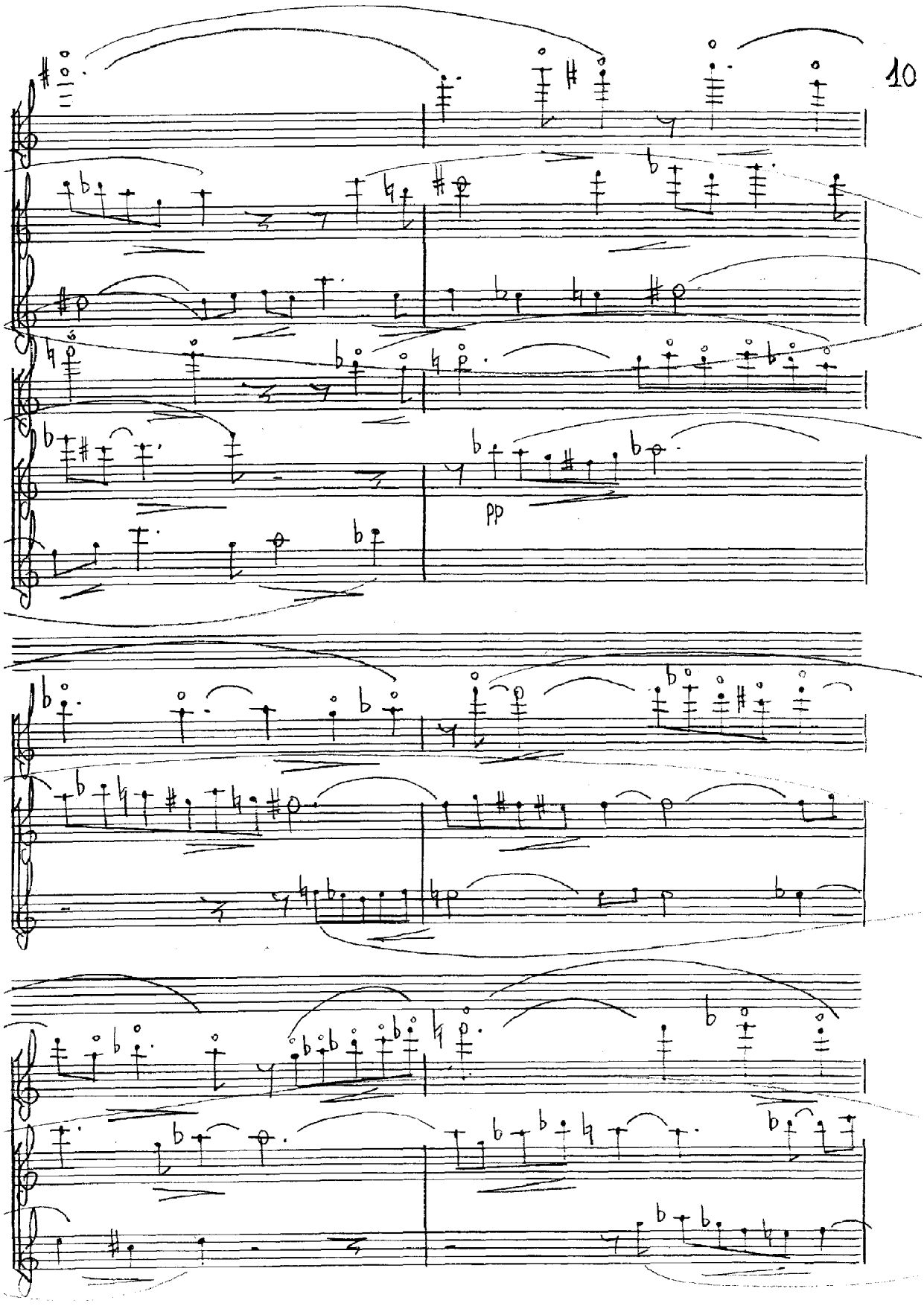

II
Allegretto
leggiero
poco espr.
dolcissimo

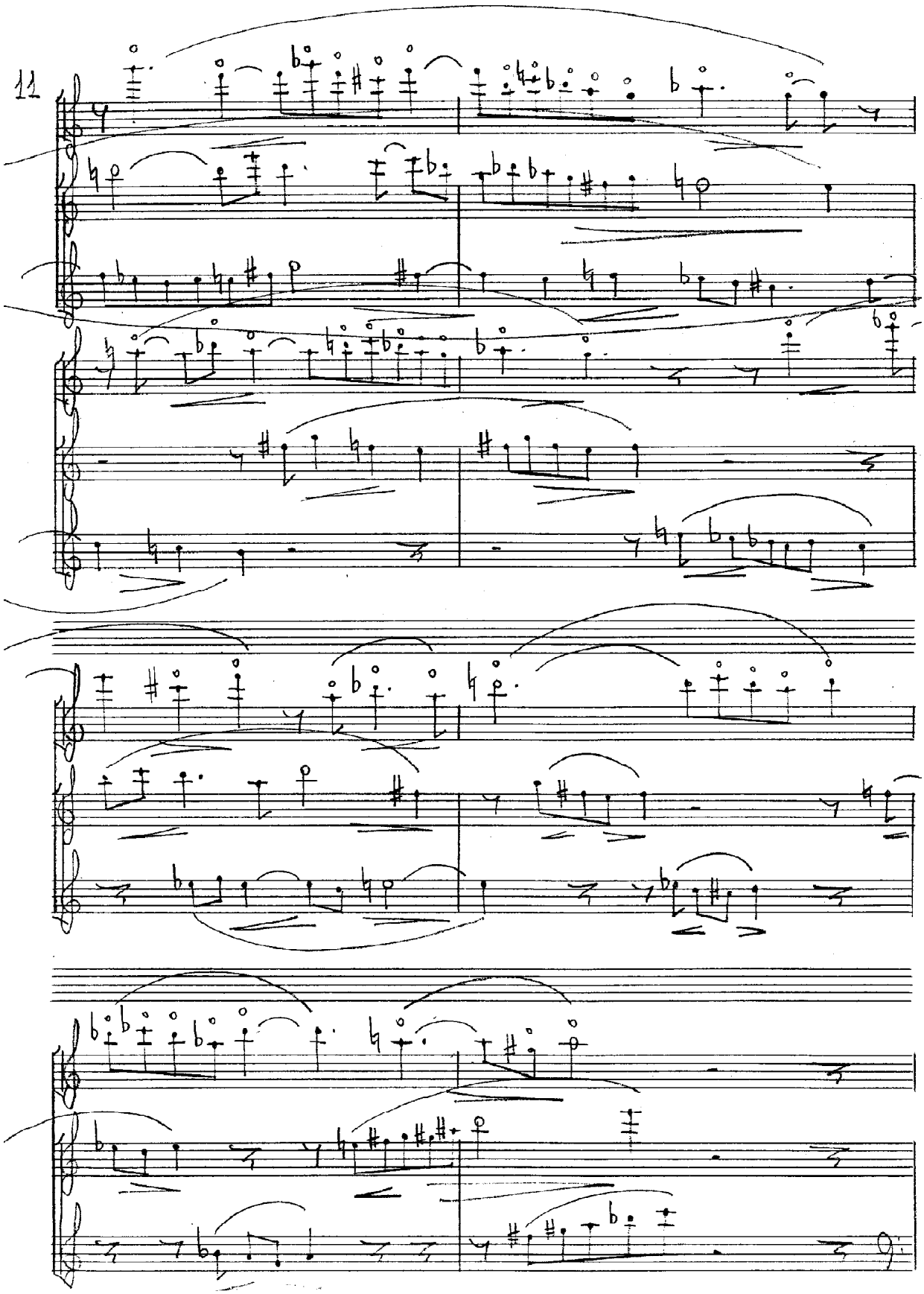

6
espr.
poco espr.

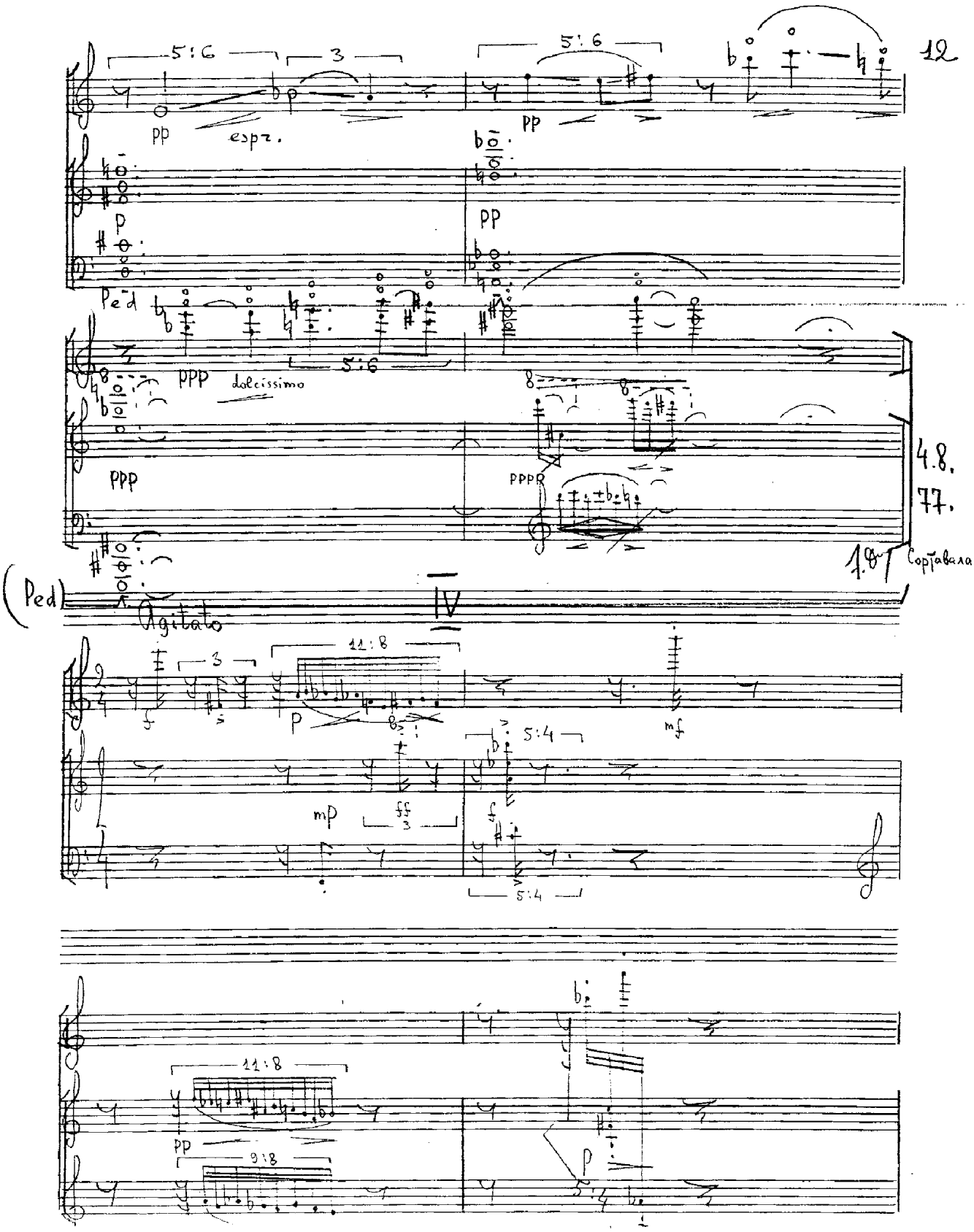

poco espr.
espr.
mp
mf
ppp
pp
p

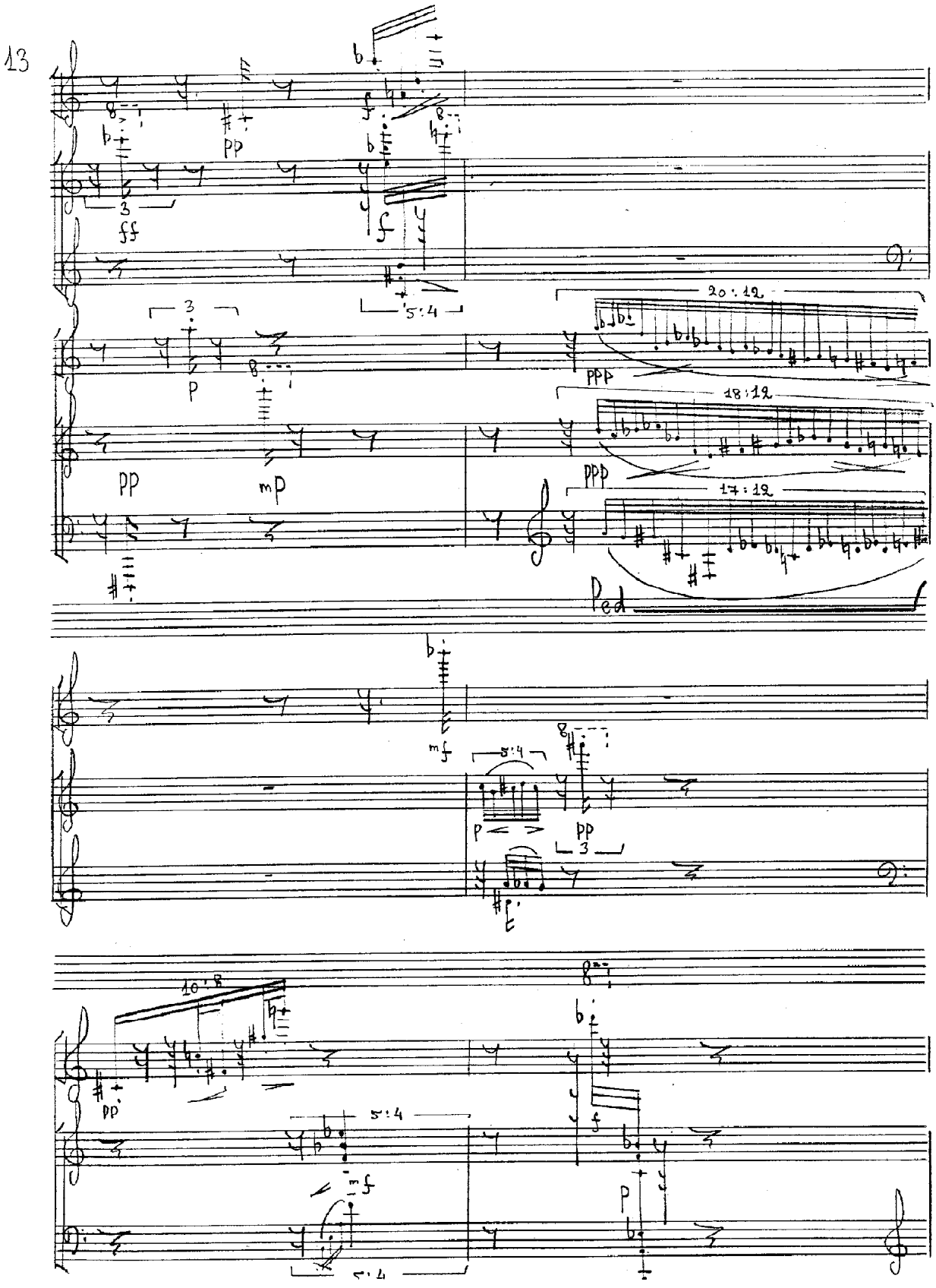

8
7:8
5:4
pp
ppp
poco espr.
Ped
dolcissimo
4.8.
77.

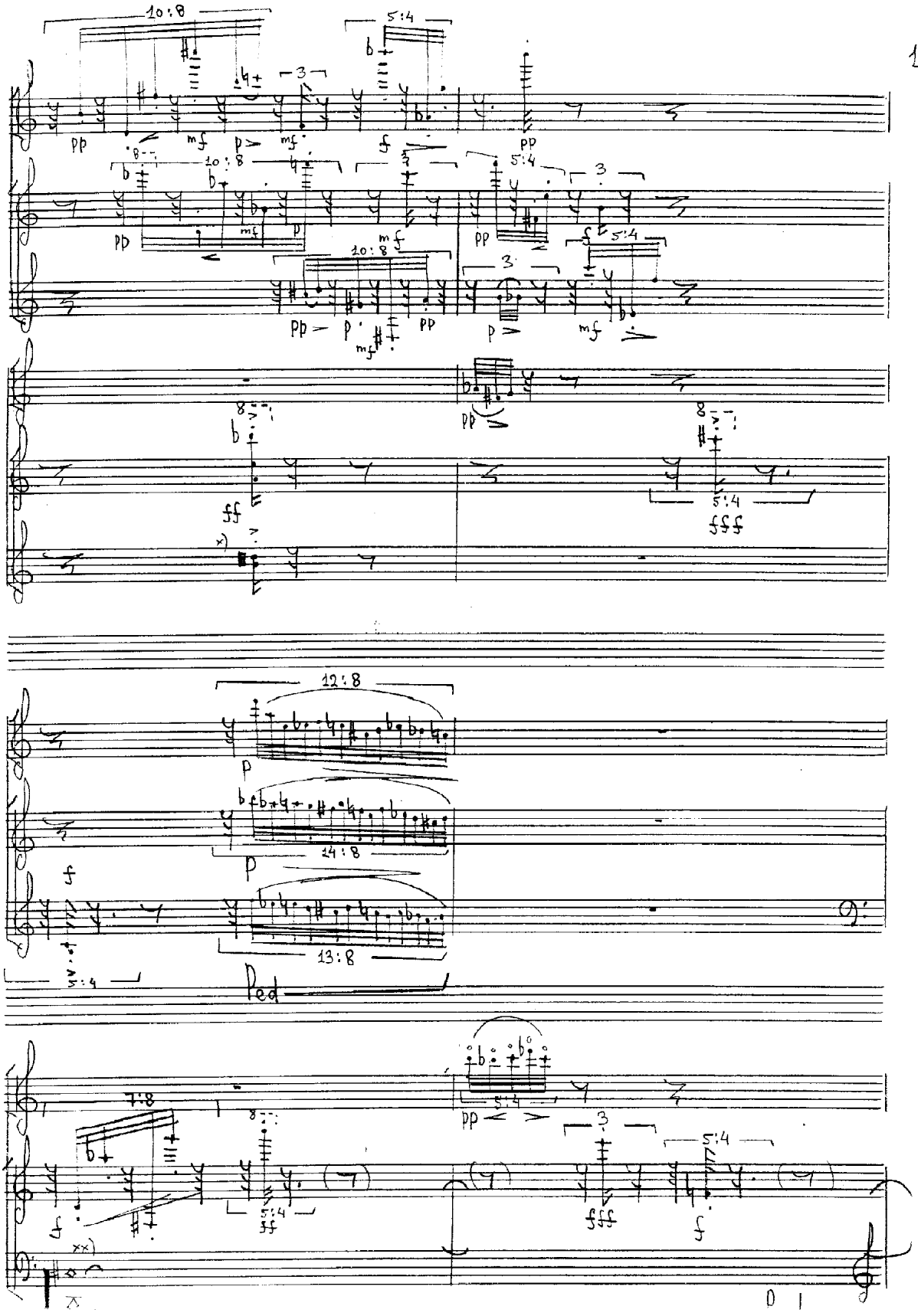

Molto tranquillo
III
9
pp dolce, poco espr.
pp dolce, poco espr.
pp

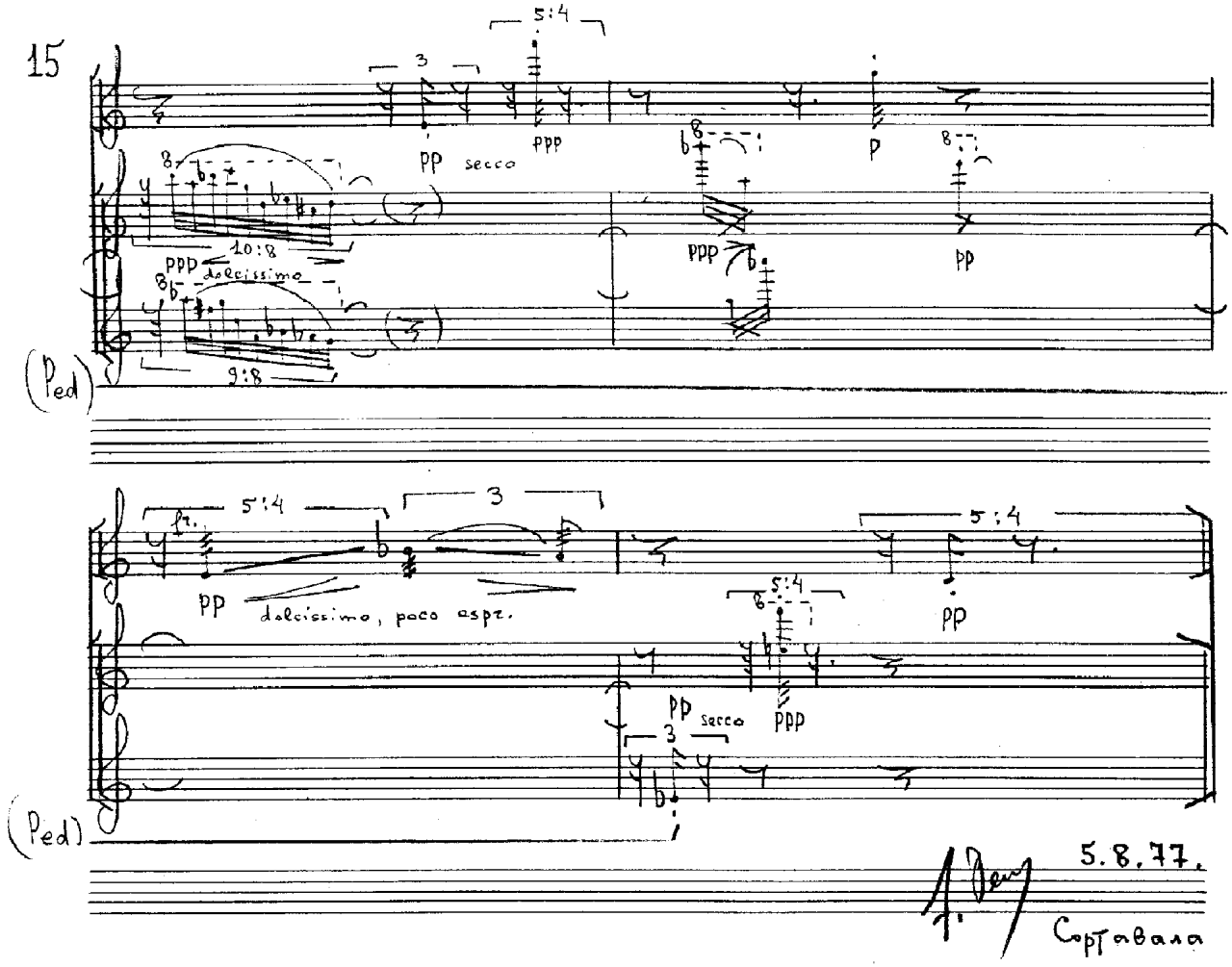

10
pp


11


12
5:6
3
5:6
pp
espr.
pp
p
pp
Ped
5:6
ppp
dolcissimo
ppp
pppp
4.8.
77.
1.8
Сортавала
(Ped)
Agitato
IV
11:8
3
p
5:4
mf
mp
ff
3
5:4
11:8
pp
9:8
p
5:4


13
pp
ff
f
5:4
p
mp
20:12
ppp
18:12
17:12
Ped
mf
5:4
p
pp
3
10:8
pp
5:4
mf
f
p


10:8
5:4
pp
mf
p
f
ff
fff
fff
12:8
14:8
13:8
7:8
Ped


15
5:4
3
pp secco
ppp
p
10:8
ppp dolcissimo
9:8
(Ped)
fp.
5:4
3
pp dolcissimo, poco aspr.
5:4
pp
pp secco
ppp
3
(Ped)
5.8.77.
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